

KNOWLEDGE QUEST



THE INTENTIONALITY OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANSHIP

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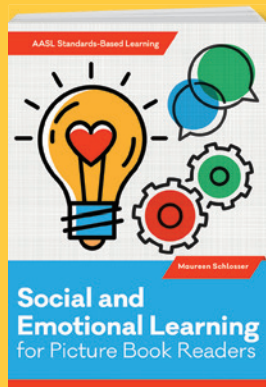
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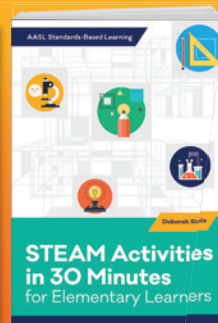
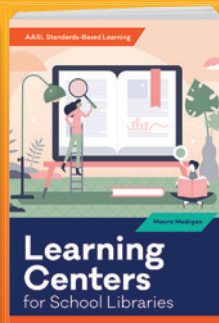


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It is important to align our work supporting students' right to read with the efforts of other educational groups.

Intentionality: We Are All Advocates

Kathy Lester, 2022–2023 AASL President | kathylester.lib@gmail.com

The AASL vision statement “Every school librarian is a leader; every learner has a school librarian” (AASL 2022) is a statement that is important to me. I am passionate in my belief that *all* students deserve equity of access to effective school libraries staffed by certified school librarians. I have been very active in Michigan advocating for our students’ access to school libraries and have worked hard alongside other Michigan Association for Media in Education (MAME) leaders to educate stakeholders about the unique expertise of certified school librarians, and their impact on our students and the wider educational community. MAME has also worked to build relationships among stakeholder groups to build support for our aspirational goal for all students to have access to an effective school library.

In my years of state-level advocacy work I have learned many things, and I’d like to reflect on a few of those lessons here:

- 1) The importance of state- and local-level advocacy
- 2) The importance of aligning the work of the school librarian with the goals of educational leaders and stakeholders
- 3) The importance of centering school library advocacy on the impact on students

I have learned that state and local advocacy is extremely critical because, while federal programs provide some funding and guidance, most educational policy is defined and implemented at the state and local levels

4) The importance of building partnerships

5) The importance of *all* school librarians having a role in advocacy work

One. The Importance of State- and Local-Level Advocacy

I have learned that state and local advocacy is extremely critical because, while federal programs provide some funding and guidance, most educational policy is defined and implemented at the state and local levels (Findlaw 2018). An example of this is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which provided guidance to states on the possibility of spending federal program dollars on school

libraries, but it was up to each state to define their own plan based on this guidance.

What do things look like in your state or your district? What decisions at either the state or local level can you influence?

Two. The Importance of Aligning the Work of the School Librarian with the Goals of Education Leaders and Stakeholders

In Michigan the AASL Chapter, Michigan Association for Media in Education (MAME), recently worked with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to align the role of the school librarian to the MDE strategic plan. The document “Effective School Libraries – Alignment with MDE Strategic Plan” (MAME 2022) outlines the work of school librarians towards the goals of improving early literacy achievement; improving health, safety, and wellness of learners; and increasing high school graduation rates and learners’ post-secondary success. This alignment document has supported MAME’s collaboration with MDE and helped lead to a memorandum that was sent to all Michigan school districts to reaffirm the importance of school libraries, to provide guidance on the essential instructional role of the school librarian, and to remind districts about the possibility of using Title IA, Title IIA, and Title IVA dollars for effective school libraries under ESSA (Michigan Dept. of Ed. 2022).

What are the goals of the educational leaders and stakeholders in your state, district, or school? How can you align your work with these goals?

Three. The Importance of Centering School Library Advocacy on the Impact on Students

The American Library Association Committee on Library Advocacy developed a new infographic in 2021 titled “Students Reach Greater Heights with School Librarians.” I am a member of that committee, and we designed the infographic to keep the messaging both centered on students and aligned with key goals in education. These educational goals included:

- improved student achievement,
- equitable access to diverse resources,
- digital literacy and meaningful technology integration,
- social-emotional learning and the library as a safe space, and

Much of the work of advocacy is educating stakeholders about our work and establishing relationships.

- information- and media-literate students.

How can you use this infographic for advocacy? How do you include the impact on students in your messaging about your library?

Four. The Importance of Building Partnerships

In Michigan we have found it important to build partnerships with a wide range of educational stakeholders. In 2021 seventeen organizations signed onto a letter (MAME 2021) supporting the Michigan School Library Bills that are currently stalled in the House Education Committee: HB4663, HB4664, and HB 4665. These organizations include the Michigan Parent Teacher Association, the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association, the Michigan Education Association, and more. In addition, although the Michigan Association for Secondary School Principals, the Michigan Association for Superintendents and Administrators, and the Michigan Association for School Boards did not sign onto the letter because of funding concerns, all three of these associations wrote articles aimed at their members and published in their newsletters, advocating for investment in school libraries.

Recently, MAME released a Joint Freedom to Read Statement with the Michigan Reading Association and the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MAME, MCTE, and MRA 2022). It is important to align our work supporting students’ right to read with the efforts of other educational groups. We are hopeful that this will strengthen our fight against censorship.

What are some potential partners for your work in advocating for student access to libraries at either the state or local level?

Five. The Importance of All School Librarians Having a Role in Advocacy Work

AASL Past-President Audrey Church’s theme when she was president of her state’s association was “Advocacy Begins with You!” and I could not agree more. Much of

As we move forward into what some call “the new normal,” we, as school library professionals, must continue to advocate for the needs of our learners and to advocate for equity of access for all students to effective school libraries staffed by certified school librarians.

the work of advocacy is educating stakeholders about our work and establishing relationships. Thus, as we begin a new school year, set a goal to reach out to at least one stakeholder or legislator to:

- share information or stories about your library’s work with students, or
- invite to visit or attend a special event in your library, or
- invite to read with students, or
- all of the above.

What specific action will you commit to for the upcoming school year?

Moving Forward

As we move forward into what some call “the new normal,” we, as school library professionals, must continue to advocate for the needs of our learners and to advocate for equity of access for all students to effective school libraries staffed by certified school librarians. My hope is that all AASL members will commit to an advocacy action no matter how small. In addition, I know that we will support each other in our state or local advocacy work.

Kathy Lester, 2022–2023 President of AASL, is a school librarian at East Middle School in Plymouth–Canton Community Schools in Michigan. She is also an ALA Councilor-at-Large and serves on ALA’s Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) as well as on COLA’s Ecosystem Subcommittee. She is active in her state association, the Michigan Association for Media in Education (MAME). She is a past-president of MAME and serves as a co-chair for its Advocacy Committee. Kathy also serves on the advisory council of two Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant Projects: *School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution?* (SLIDE) led by Project Director Debra E. Kachel and Principal Investigator Keith Curry Lance, and *Restoring Urban School Libraries* (RUSL) with Project Director Kafi Kumasi.

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Our students and families have never needed us more. During the pandemic, our country woke up to what we've known all along, that public schools provide essential services for students and their families, communities, and our economy.

What Fuels Us: Values-Driven Librarianship

Iris Eichenlaub | irisdeichenlaub@gmail.com

The student returning Maia Kobabe's memoir *Gender Queer* told me that they never expected to find a book that echoed so many aspects ("weirdly exact details") of their personal experience. They went on to apologize for keeping it an extra week because they had to make their dad, boyfriend, and sister read it, too. This was a spark for me last year, a moment that reconnected me to the purpose and values that drive my work.

If you're reading this, you have plenty of your own spark moments about the lives you've changed, and it's not an exaggeration to say that you've probably saved some lives. Getting the right book to the right reader at the right moment is a radically transformative act. Yet it's tough to reconcile this when so many communities are struggling to fund or fill school librarian positions. It's even harder to accept that school librarians and educators are under attack for the books we have on our shelves. Many of us have felt our own inner spark flickering, our spirits flagging under the constant demands and pressure.

In the past three years, schools and educators have pivoted and reinvented ourselves, reimagined how we teach and the services we deliver to our students and families, iterated and modified systems and methods on the fly. We've been handed new teaching responsibilities, and stepped into new leadership roles in our schools. Our students and families have never needed us more. During the pandemic, our country woke up to what we've known all along, that public schools provide essential services for students and their families, communities, and our economy.

More specifically, our students and families need "us," their school librarians. We are essential.

The *Knowledge Quest* Editorial Board chose the theme of this issue to take stock of what truly matters in school librarianship. We're not the same as we were in February 2020. What still holds true? What will we carry forward with intention in 2022? Seen from the 50,000-foot view, what is truly at the core of what we do?

Purpose

Our content expert for this issue, Hannah Byrd Little, asks readers to consider the tension between our dearest values and changing world in "A School Librarian's Purpose." S.R. Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science are a succinct and elegant summation of the purpose of libraries, according to Little. His Fifth Law still rings true nearly one hundred years later, and is arguably the most important: "A library is a growing organism" (Wikimedia Foundation 2022). In 2022, thriving school libraries are responsive and adaptable, particularly in the landscape of near-constant change during a pandemic. Little cites Jim Collins, who describes lasting organizations as having "a set of timeless core values and purpose that remain constant over time" coupled with "a relentless drive for progress—change, improvement, innovation, and renewal" (Collins 2022). Collins's "dynamic duality" is precisely what we've been balancing while dealing with the effects of Covid—and is perhaps why our professional practices in recent years have been so exhausting.

Values

Even in the digital age, building relationships by connecting readers (students and teachers alike) and books remains the heart of what we do. Alicia Abdul, author of “I’m the Lucky One: Readers’ Advisory at the Core of School Librarianship,” is a self-avowed “reader and a librarian,” and both are balanced equally in her personal and professional identities. Sharing her passion for books is translated into booktalking in all forms—a “walk-and-talk” as she strolls the stacks with a reader, booktalking with classes, or virtual booktalks, both live or recorded. Through the readers’ advisory conversation about books and preferences, the individual feels seen, respected, and affirmed by their librarian. All readers, including (especially!) those at the high school level need to be able to select books for personal interest—without judgment—to continue to grow as lifelong readers. Abdul calls on school librarians to educate our colleagues and advocate in our schools and broader communities that “reading is reading.” Period.

Mission and Vision

“My brain was frazzled because I was going from one task to another with no downtime in between, and I could hardly focus on anything before facing another interruption.” Megan Musick sums up the day of a school librarian in just one sentence! It’s discouraging to leave school at the end of the day wondering what we’ve actually accomplished. Musick’s article, “When to Lead and When to Manage: Balancing Lofty Goals with Day-to-Day Tasks in the School Library,” includes a framework and practical tips for reimagining our time at school.

She outlines how to start with the big picture, a mission and vision, and end up with a task list for a typical day. Understanding the difference between leadership and management is essential for organizing and sometimes delegating the tasks associated with the many roles school librarians fulfill—even within our own libraries, we wear so many hats. This article is an actionable resource for all of us who need a purposeful reset to manage the big picture amidst the whirlwind of our days.

Clarity and Intention

Students were wandering the aisles, struggling to find their favorite genres amidst the acres of fiction books. The emergent readers couldn’t find their way to their favorite animal books in the nonfiction section (probably looking for shark books, because it’s always the shark books with kindergarteners). Michael Rawls, author of “How I Solve Problems in the School Library with Intention,” is purposeful about centering student agency

in the elementary library. After transitioning from the classroom, Rawls began by observing the existing systems and patterns of use. It was the “glitches” that helped him identify the need for adaptation and innovation, with the goal of making “the library more user-friendly and more accessible.”

Rawls’ observations uncovered barriers to access that were contributing to both management and behavior issues. Removing these barriers solved those problems, and as a bonus, resulted in more joy in the library for learners. His fresh approach to the continuous iteration of solutions exemplifies the library as a “growing organism”—and what’s more, creates a student-centered environment where students are actively engaged and empowered.

Your Values Light the Way

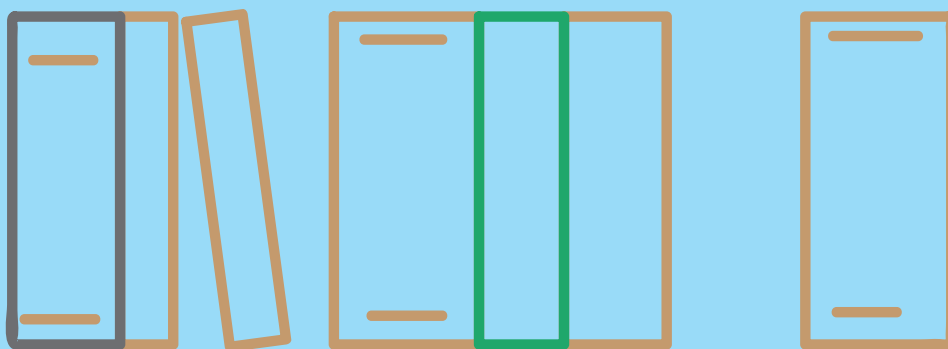
Some years our spark moments come like fireflies, multiplying exponentially through synchronicity and connection, reigniting our inspiration and passion as school librarians. Other times, for any number of reasons, our own light has dimmed and the sparks are less frequent. Reframing our intentions and rediscovering our purpose is how we reconnect with the core values of our vocation, so we can rekindle that spark. Because your spark leads to a flame, your flame becomes a fire, and that warm glow is the heart of your school.

Iris Eichenlaub is currently on a leave of absence from her role as librarian/instructional coach at Camden Hills Regional High School in Rockport, Maine. She is a member of AASL, has served on the editorial board for Knowledge Quest since 2020, and before that she wrote for the KQ blog. Iris currently serves as the Social Media and Engagement Chair for the Maine Association of School Libraries. She was named the 2017 Knox County (ME) Teacher of the Year, a 2017 Maine Education Association Inspiring Educator, and the 2022 Walter J. Taranko Maine School Librarian of the Year.

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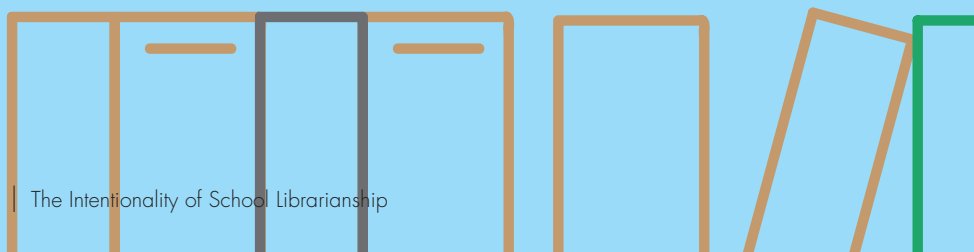
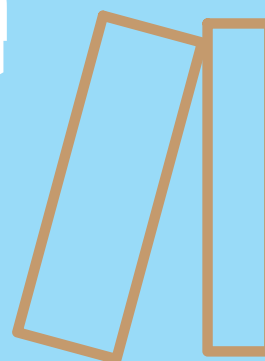
FEATURE



A School Librarian's Purpose

Hannah Byrd Little

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If you ask an administrator, a teacher, a student, or a parent what a school librarian's purpose is, you will get a variety of answers. Many of the responses would be accurate, but sometimes stakeholders have a misconception about what the occupation or role truly is. As a result, they do not realize that school librarians are incredible assets to the community. Some administrators and teachers have expectations primarily based on stereotypes. The perception is often that librarians simply shelve and check out books. This misconception is why some feel a clerk can replace a library professional. In an article from *Edutopia*, Benjamin Barbour lists "3 Key Roles of School Librarians." He encourages teachers to understand librarians' roles as literacy advocates, resource managers, and research specialists (Barbour 2022). Though school librarians wear many hats, these roles are both critical and enduring.

Choosing a Career in School Librarianship on Purpose

If you will indulge me, I will tell you a bit of my path to school librarianship.

School librarianship was not my first career. I worked in the travel industry for seven years, and that career path abruptly ended following the events of September 11, 2001. That week in September all flights were grounded. Within a week after the tragedy, nearly all of my clients had canceled their future travel. I went from full-time to part-time that week, and then a week after that I was job-hunting. Before the tragic events of 9/11, I had seen the writing on the wall with reduced airline and hotel commissions. Additionally, more and more customers were booking their travel online. Then in early 2002, airlines stopped paying commissions altogether. So

I began the career transition into librarianship in February 2002. Of course, some questioned my decision. They asked if I was just going from one struggling sector to another. The primary concern raised by family, friends, and advisors was that the Internet would shrink the need for librarians as it had diminished careers in travel consulting.

I went through a deep searching process to decide on my ultimate career path. I knew the library world was calling, and I began study for an MLIS degree. However, I didn't know whether I wanted to work at and advance in a university library where I had found an amazing position as a paraprofessional or pursue the route of school librarianship. I enrolled in a class that I thought was focused on resume writing and other career-building tips, only to find that it was a class about decision-making and discernment. The professor in the class employed a two-part method of decision-making. She used St. Ignatius of Loyola's discernment process, which has been used for centuries by people contemplating religious vocation. The other part of the method was adapted from the Quakers' decision-making process using both discernment and questioning as articulated in Parker J. Palmer's 1999 book *Let Your Life Speak*. Instead of pros and cons, the process the professor taught considers what brings deep comfort and "consolation" juxtaposed against what makes the person feel dry like a desert or "desolate."

In the class, we were instructed to "live" a week with each side of a decision. For me, it was a choice between academic and school librarianship. In the living with each side of the decision, one plays out all of the consequences of each decision. During my week of "living" as a school librarian and seeing the comforts and challenges, I knew

with great clarity that this was the field for me. I would not only be a librarian, but very specifically—and intentionally—I would be a school librarian.

Choosing to Practice School Librarianship with Intentionality

What does it mean to practice school librarianship with intentionality?

We have many resources to inform our practice. Whether advocating with jobs and industry research gleaned from experts like Keith Curry Lance and Deborah E. Kachel or using data gathered in individual libraries, we can mindfully approach day-to-day work in a school library with informed practice. Our efforts will garner the respect of teachers and administrators as we support classroom instruction and help our students develop critical-thinking and information-literacy skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. Some intentional work of professional librarians as we seek to best serve learners includes conducting collection analyses, creating well-crafted surveys, and serving on the school's academic leadership team.

When doing our work, we are guided by our values. My MLIS program covered what would become "The Core Values of Librarianship," adopted by the American Library Association Council (ALA 2019). These values guide my decisions in professional practice and have been the cornerstone of my career in library science. For example, intellectual freedom and privacy are critical ethical concepts I discussed eighteen years ago in graduate school that I practice with intentionality today.

Not too many years ago, I heard about a librarian and mathematician from India who in 1931 created the

"Five Laws of Librarianship" (Yucht 2001). These concepts or "laws" stated by S. R. Ranganathan, though designed for the public library, relate even more to the school library, in my opinion. Consciously observing these laws can help our collections and mindsets remain critical and relevant as our practices evolve while our focus remains on supporting learners.

Ranganathan's Five Laws

1. Books are for use
2. Every person their book
3. Every book its reader
4. Save the time of the reader
5. A library is a growing organism

On his website Jim Collins, one of the authors of *Built to Last*, explains the paradox of an enduring and visionary organization:

Enduring great organizations exhibit a dynamic duality. On the one hand, they have a set of timeless core values and purpose that remain constant over time. On the other hand, they have a relentless drive for progress—change, improvement, innovation, and renewal. (Collins 2022)

Like any enduring organization, school librarianship—if it is "built to last"—must also have this duality of core values and the commitment to adapt and grow. In 2017 AASL launched the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. The six Shared Foundations are Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage. Much time has been invested in helping school librarians put the standards into practice, developing their own competencies while leading a school library that aligns with the

AASL Standards to support learners as they develop the competencies needed for success in school and in the rest of their lives. AASL has developed tools to support librarians' efforts as they purposefully examine their practices and incorporate the standards. Among these tools are five crosswalks showing commonalities and overlap with other education standards relevant to 21st-century teaching and learning, books, videos, and even a standards card game. These materials help school librarians deliberately and effectively adapt in a rapidly changing education landscape.

Choosing to Advocate for School Librarians and School Libraries with Intentionality and Confidence

At a plenary session at the 2016 Tennessee Association of Independent Schools conference, Dr. Andrew Van Schaack, a futurist and Vanderbilt professor, said of future careers, "Nonroutine cognitive jobs are not going away." Van Schaack drew these conclusions from a 2015 report by Henry Siu and Nir Jaimovich. In other words, computers, the Internet, or robots will not replace cognitive jobs like ours. That said, we know that for our students' sakes, we must persist in advocating for school libraries led by qualified school librarians.

The big advocacy questions we must answer are: How can we as school librarians help administrators and other stakeholders understand that school librarianship is primarily cognitive and needs high levels of flexibility—especially when the stereotype is that librarians are all about routine? How do we advocate using our purpose or intention to best support learners and our school communities?

I believe that librarianship is a noble profession, and I'm in good company! Benjamin Franklin, founding father, inventor, and advocate for both libraries and democracy, is the focus of a 2021 *Publishers Weekly* article "School



Libraries Are the Bedrock of Freedom." Authors Joann Davis and Kenneth C. Davis wrote:

Convinced that libraries cultivated the spirit of democracy, Franklin later noted, 'These Libraries have improved the general Conversation of Americans'...he also believed that every school should have a dedicated library, because a democracy can only survive with educated citizens.

Move ahead a century from Franklin's time to the late 1800s when my school was founded. In 1886 the Webb brothers moved their school from Culleoka to Bell Buckle, Tennessee. They had \$12,000 to invest in education. Of their original investment, they spent \$8,000 on books (Holliman 1977). The elder brother, William R. "Sawney" Webb, wrote in a pamphlet in 1898 about secondary schools:

In every case let the library cost more than the other equipment, for a good school must have for teachers as well as pupils, a library of well-selected books.

Our school not only has a strong tie to books, it also has a long history of professional school librarians. For example, our archives contain a 1931 article "The Webb School Library." Initially published in *The Tennessee Teacher*, the article was written by then-school librarian David N. McQuiddy. He refers to a report made at the June 1931 ALA annual meeting in New Haven, Connecticut. In this article McQuiddy encourages reading for personal growth, praises ways to facilitate research, and promotes literacy, inquiry, and critical thinking. McQuiddy wrote:

Today, more than ever before, the purpose of an education should be 'to teach one to read' and to read intelligently. But

reading intelligently implies more than correct literary tastes. [It] implies the ability to consult the correct sources of reliable information.

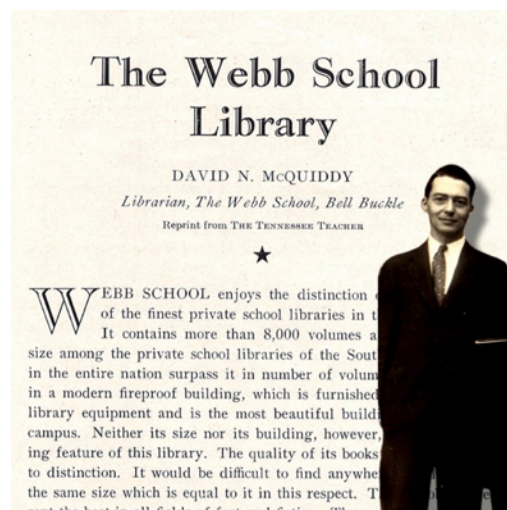
Our 1930s librarian was concerned in his time with teaching students about skills for determining reliable sources.

The concept that libraries are critical to our country's democracy was not just a concern of Ben Franklin. It is revealed in communication between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Librarian of Congress Herbert Putnam in 1939.

I have an unshaken conviction that democracy can never be undermined if we maintain our library resources and a national intelligence capable of utilizing them. (Waters 1976)

Unfortunately, not everyone shares our convictions about the importance of libraries and school librarians. As school librarians, we have a massive job to do in 2022—and beyond. In many areas of the U.S., school librarians are in a battle for the profession. In some quarters, there is a current campaign to deprofessionalize not just librarians but all educators. In an investigative report, the local TV news station in Tennessee (where I live and work) reported that an education advisor to the governor was caught on video saying:

Here's a key thing that we're going to try to do. We are going to try to demonstrate that you don't have to be an expert to educate a child because basically anybody can do it. ...The teachers are trained



in the dumbest parts of the dumbest colleges in the country. (Williams 2022)

Though it may not be a comfort to know educators are not alone in being under attack, there is evidence of distrust of all experts, including medical professionals and other scientists. For example, in early 2022, Tennessee's Board of Medical Examiners adopted a statement—and posted it on their website—warning that doctors who promulgate false information about Covid-19 and its treatment could lose their licenses. State lawmakers demanded that the warning statement be removed from the Board of Medical Examiners website, usurping the board's power. According to Blake Farmer and Mary Louise Kelly of NPR, "Tennessee's medical board did pull down its COVID [anti]misinformation statement from the web, as ordered by lawmakers" (2022).

Librarians in Tennessee and across the U.S. are encountering attacks on professionalism. Political groups have launched fierce campaigns attempting to defame librarians when we advocate for intellectual freedom and support books written by or about those in marginalized communities. Faith Huff, a librarian quoted by *Publishers Weekly*, explains

that “public schools as a whole are being held to an expectation of one type of person. But those aren’t the only people we serve” (Maughan 2022). The idea of parental control should frustrate most parents because no one would want another parent with a very different world view “controlling” what all children can and cannot read. This pursuit of both equity and intellectual freedom is precisely where and when a professional librarian is essential.

We are working in a sometimes difficult social climate, but we must, as professionals, rise to the occasion with intention and prove that school librarians and school libraries that support *all* learners are here to stay!



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ALA, AASL, and ACRL member, she writes a monthly article for the AASL Knowledge Quest website. She is the 2022–2023 chair of the AASL Independent School Section and was recognized as an AASL Social Media Superstar in 2019 for Sensational Student Voice. She co-authored a local history book for Arcadia Publishing in 2019. Hannah also served on the Tennessee Association of School Librarians (TASL) Executive Board from 2009 to 2013 and was TASL president in 2012. Before working in schools, she spent nearly four years in an academic library. She began working in technical services and then added instructional work with the university’s information literacy team.



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Supporting
ARTICLE

I'm THE LUCKY ONE

Readers Advisory at the
Core of School Librarianship





Alicia Abdul

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When *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* was published by the American Association of School Librarians in 2018, I was overjoyed to see that one of the six common beliefs was “Reading is the core of personal and academic competency” (AASL 2018, 11). The declaration that “reading is the core” wasn’t devalued using qualifiers. I’ve held this belief for the sixteen years I’ve been in education, including the last fifteen as a high school librarian. This statement in print and bold-faced type reinvigorated my work as it should the work of any school librarian.

I can enact the other roles of school librarians, too, but I am my best self as a reader’s advisor and wholeheartedly agree with Sarah A. Evans’s statement in her article “‘Book Nerds’ United: The Reading Lives of Diverse Adolescents at the Public Library” that “it is librarians’ love of books, combined with their professional practices, that creates one of the most valuable contributions to society, especially when they are working with diverse youth” (2019, 41). I would further argue that all other duties fall into place when the establishment of a relationship between learner and librarian built on and around books comes first. I am a reader

and a librarian. And both are equally impactful to my identity professionally as they are personally.

Who Says, ‘They Don’t Read’?

This utterance is common when other adults learn that I’m a school librarian and a high school one specifically. Too many adults are too quick to lament the death of reading, but school librarians all know that

The school library must have open and equitable access for all students and incorporate itself into the fabric of the school. Open the doors, and students will come to read.

this statement is a great exaggeration. Young adult literature is booming both in readership and sales—and yes it’s not just teens who are reading these books. If how I spend my days is any indication, reading is alive and well. Access to reading material and an established culture of reading that strengthens readership are among

the elements that AASL addresses in the standards. The school library must have open and equitable access for all students and incorporate itself into the fabric of the school. Open the doors, and students will come to read.

Always Bringing It Back to Books

And read they do, when approximately half of our scheduled classes are for book and book-adjacent activities. To encourage group and individual selections, my co-librarian and I begin the year with booktalks and maintain readership with continued opportunities for independent reading, in addition to reading embedded in the curriculum. We end the year by talking about the kinds of books students can read for the summer. The constant attention to booktalks is because teachers respect my authority, passion, and insight, backed by the well-selected (and well-weeded) collection that I’m talking from.

Books do bring us together. Events like author visits and specialized book groups provide opportunities for outreach and demonstrate to other educators in the school just how far we’re willing to go to get students reading. It’s a shared goal that encourages teachers to invite

us into their classrooms to spread around the love of reading.

We harnessed this love under a hashtag for our library—#ReadLikeAFalcon—to unify us much like a sports team or club. We rebranded materials with it, used it in social media posts, and gave every teacher a laminated sign to hang in their classroom for the sole purpose of advertising what they were reading. Our purpose was to showcase all of the ways our school engages in learning through reading to represent our individual interests or the greater community. This unified feeling of being a community of readers became even more important when the pandemic hit.

Rebecca J. Morris and Jenna Kammer pointed out that students still wanted to read, especially because reading provided them an opportunity to relax and unwind in stressful times such as the Covid-19 pandemic (2021, 17). For us, booktalking increased significantly. After our district decided to be completely virtual due to budget constraints resulting from the pandemic, I heard from students and teachers that books were an important and much-needed break from screens. We provided those books. Some were requested online and picked up “grab and go”-style in brown paper bags, or selected during private, scheduled visits to the library. Others were mailed or dropped off on learners’ doorsteps. I didn’t lament the extra work involved with getting books into the hands of readers. I also didn’t mind pivoting on the delivery methods for booktalks: synchronous live booktalks through Google Meets or prerecorded booktalks offered asynchronously through our YouTube channel.

The Big Three

During the pandemic three categories of books were asked for repeatedly: murder, romance, and humor. Within a few months I ordered more print and digital titles in those categories and spent the summer thinking deeply about readers’ choices. This reflection allowed me to conclude that they see themselves in the collection available and are comfortable asking for anything they’re interested in, including traditionally taboo or not-so-academic topics. They know our school library is a no-judgment zone, the importance of which has been highlighted in a recent article “Keeping Teens Reading—Get Them to a Library.” School librarians need to remind themselves that what matters is that learners *are* reading, not *what* they are reading. Let’s end the arguments that graphic novels aren’t real reading and that audiobooks are cheating (Students Need School Libraries Leadership Team 2021).

So why murder, romance, and humor? My conclusion is that as teens were locked down at home with sustained proximity to their family, their frustration produced some murderous thoughts. Books allowed these fantasies to play out without the real-life repercussions, though the glut of true-crime shows and podcasts could also be a factor. Similarly, without opportunities to socialize and have personal meet-cutes, teens had to enjoy vicarious socializing in their reading material instead. Readers wanted something sweet as opposed to the sour news inundating them. Humor’s popularity is no surprise! Everyone needed opportunities to feel happy when the world turned grim. We often turned to old favorites to make us laugh. We needed duct tape to hold these favorite books together, while the wait list was perpetually long for

their digital equivalents. The act of reading should be pleasurable. Therefore, arguing that a reader must always read something new deters them from reading altogether.

We must also actively engage in dialogue with our school and larger community about the concept that reading is reading. Providing learners with *any* opportunity to read is our focus. This approach builds their stamina and excitement to continue reading and learning. Providing excitement around books helps build a school-wide culture of reading.

Judgement-Free Zones

Remember when I mentioned ditching the diatribe about graphic novels and audiobooks not being real reading? And remember when I told you that reading is not dead? In certain classrooms in our schools, these beliefs might seem alive and well if a school librarian doesn’t make an effort to provide support for learners *and* educators. This need is especially true for special education classes and English Language Learners. However, because of a culture of reading in our school, we librarians are in these classes like all the others. We also cultivate a collection to give *all* teen readers access to academic and pleasure reading. This results in a robust collection that represents the needs of every learner we serve. Those learners can help themselves to the collection or ask for the guidance from their librarian.

Scotland and the United States piloted programs aimed at addressing what students were lacking in reading, namely a space to share their reading interests with others and a place to read (Wilkinson et al. 2020). We need to make it a priority in the library and the classroom to actively encourage reading because one reason teens stop reading is a lack of

encouragement to read (Wilkinson et al. 2020). That situation can easily be remedied by making reading a routine part of attending school, from the selection of the book to dedicated time to read it. Selecting the books and reading them takes place in more spaces than just the library. By supporting teachers in cultivating classroom libraries as well, librarians provide more opportunities for students to interact with books in a safe environment.

Artful Booktalking

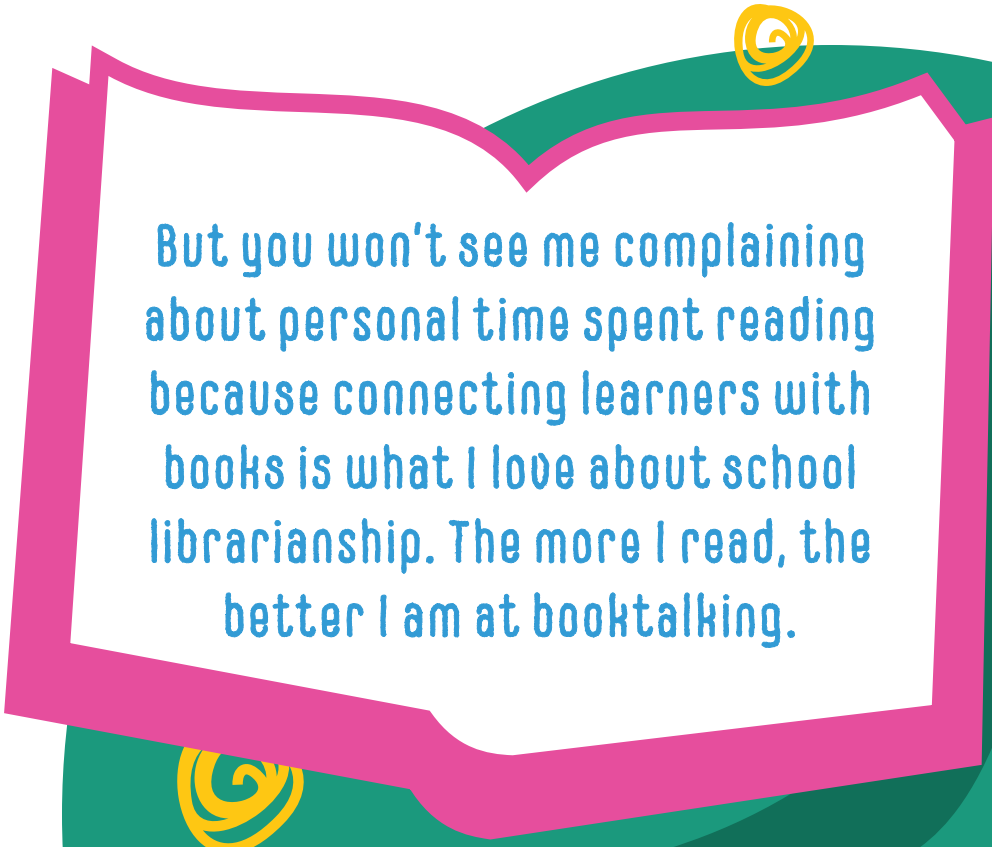
Whether in the flesh or through a computer screen, the art of the booktalk is a skill. I hone it by mimicking other school librarians' approaches, creating succinct pitches similar to those of publishers at conferences, and using meaningful vocabulary when evaluating a book. During my service on multiple Young Adult Library Services Association booklist committees, I've learned some valuable tips for booktalking from my professional colleagues to boost my ability to "sell" books to readers.

The art has two parts: the strategy and knowledge of the book, and it doesn't have to be direct knowledge. I can booktalk a title I haven't read because I have other information to share: *No, I haven't read this one, but it's being turned into a Netflix series so give it a try!* Other approaches include: *Does this cover appeal to you? Why don't we both read it, and we can share our thoughts afterward?* In all honesty, though, I'd rather talk about books I *have* read and am excited to share, and that's quite a few. But you won't see me complaining about personal time spent reading because connecting learners with books is what I love about school

librarianship. The more I read, the better I am at booktalking.

Students lean in from nearby tables when I'm walking through the stacks with a student who asked for a book recommendation. The "walk and talk" is hands down my favorite kind of booktalk. David Kleeman noted that a library's collections mean nothing if readers can't or don't find something they want (2016). That statement is true when I'm walking and talking with learners, too. Learners need weeded collections, maybe some dynamic shelving in addition to easy access to an online catalog, accessibility to come in and browse, and a school librarian waiting to help. This reality is a reminder that every school library should have a certified school librarian on site to curate the collections and talk books.

Creating a variety of approaches to talking about individual or a group of books is like having multiple tools in a toolbox. Just reading an excerpt from a book is not sustainable as the only approach to booktalking. Listeners—and you—will get bored quickly. Plus, we know that no two readers are alike. They have strong opinions about reading and varying skill levels, so one approach does not fit all. Over time, tools I use to talk about books include sharing author biographies, discussing current events, quizzing listeners on history and then tying the book to their prior knowledge, profiling a social media post, or deferring to another reader who beamed when I mentioned the book and ask them to talk about it. In summary, a booktalk is a conversation, not a lecture. It involves active engagement, eye contact, and interactivity.



But you won't see me complaining about personal time spent reading because connecting learners with books is what I love about school librarianship. The more I read, the better I am at booktalking.

With a whole-class booktalk, recognize that if students have started looking at the clock instead of you and the books, it's time to shift gears. Stop talking and give them space and time to explore, while you conference with individual readers.

Building Trust

When school librarians do a lot of book-pushing individually and in classes, relationships with learners are created. Over time, the relationships lead to those three little but powerful words: "I trust you." This means I can set a stack of books in front of a student to take immediately to the desk to check out, no words necessary. Or, students see the excitement in their peers and trust that they, too, can have that excitement if they lean into what the school librarian shares is an adventurous book that they won't be disappointed to read. Again, a booktalk is a partnership and collaboration, not a solo endeavor.

Secret disappointment does creep in if a reader doesn't take my recommendation. However, I want to encourage readers to reflect on what they *do* like to read, not create situations in which readers don't feel empowered and, as a result, harbor negative feelings toward reading in general. I'm careful not to show disappointment or push too hard. Sometimes I have to walk away. Before I do, though, especially when interacting with an individual who continually rejects recommendations, I might suggest picking books by cover illustrations or thickness, or reading a first page. Students, especially "undiscovered" readers, can feel overwhelmed by our exuberance, so it's important to provide them with an opportunity to disengage, especially when they may not know how to do this on their own.

Even if someone takes my recommendation, it is not guaranteed to be a good fit, so I provide an escape hatch. I encourage readers to return a book if they dislike it. Students know my feelings won't be hurt if they bring back a book they decided not to finish. In fact, they know they can tell me why they didn't like it and that I'll be interested in their perspective. They know it'll make me happy that they can recognize when a book doesn't work for them. There are too many books on the shelves to read a bad book!

I won't ever spout research that the more they read for pleasure the higher their test scores will be, the stronger their vocabulary, or that they're building empathy, but I do know when we strip down the school librarian/student connection it will always be about books. Each relationship probably sprouted from conversations about books. And in a technology-distracted world, talking face-to-face is disappearing, so we must make the adjustments to provide authentic communication with an equalizer like books. These discussions, referenced in Evans's article, highlight the necessity of a librarian's role as a positive force for continued reading engagement (2019).

A school librarian's role isn't to recommend books only to students. We have a collection for everyone in our school community. As a result, I do just as much recommending to staff, including choices for leisure reading and for the summer professional development reading groups that have become part of our school culture. Staff look forward to opportunities to discuss books with one another at their own pace in a less stressful environment during the summer, just as they support the library's initiatives by sharing

books during the year. Ultimately, I realize that it's not just students who need the social aspect of talking peer to peer about reading. Adults do, too. Being a trusted resource also means that I frequently receive social media messages from colleagues standing in a bookstore, needing a good beach read or a book for their spouse's birthday. I'll always answer the call. It's a level of service that the American Library Association included in "Core Values of Librarianship," which highlights our role in promoting lifelong learning, be it continuing to share books with students long-since graduated or with a hall monitor who wants to read a book rather than doomscrolling on their phone.

Opening Doors with Authors and Activities

Less doomscrolling overall and more engagement with books is why in 2011 we hosted bestselling author Ellen Hopkins, and we've never looked back. We've hosted at least one author a year (but usually more), and it's become an expectation at our school. Younger siblings of former students will ask who is coming this year, and teachers want to know, in case they can incorporate the author's works into their curriculum. Meeting authors in the flesh and discussing the writing process helps students see themselves as writers in addition to readers. Sharon Flake encouraged students to read their writing out loud. Ruta Sepetys shared that her first drafts never look like the finished product. Her best writing is done during editing and revision. When these words don't come from their teachers (and librarians) but instead from published authors, the messages have greater impact. Besides the wisdom they impart, authors build a school's reading culture when the school librarians welcome them into that reading community. In the

process, students make connections with other student readers and writers.

Other ways to intentionally foster a culture of reading is through reading groups, community collaborations, or pop-up reading opportunities. Many students are overscheduled with clubs, sports, and classwork, so brief opportunities typically get more participation than do reading programs requiring recurring time commitments. The inspiration for a pop-up opportunity we offered this past year was a request from a local case manager who helps crime and sexual assault victims. She asked for an opportunity to talk with students about healthy versus unhealthy relationships. With a packed curriculum, health teachers couldn't add this content, but they were willing to offer extra credit to encourage students to read a book on the topic and participate in a book discussion. We decided on *Bad Romance* by Heather Demetrios, which features a toxic relationship, and the author agreed to visit us virtually. It was advertised as a pop-up learning opportunity that included a book to keep and a donut incentive. Interested students each received their own copy of the book, and we planned to meet a month later for a meaningful discussion led by the case manager, Demetrios, and me. As the date for the discussion got closer, a few of the original group brought friends who wanted to participate, so we ordered more books. When the date arrived and themed snacks from the book were set out, not all interested students were able to attend because of testing and other obligations. However, the students who did attend said they felt connected to one another, even though they had not formally met before. The combination of book discussion, the author's virtual presence, and both

personal commentary and resources left students asking for more opportunities like it. It's the power of books!

Reading and Books at the Core of Our Practice

If nothing else, let this brief recap solidify why a school librarian's value should be wrapped up in books. First, reading is a foundational skill, and memories are built around who we were before and who we are after reading a book. School librarians get to be a part of that transformation. Second, books still make up the heart of a physical library, and we can



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Reading: Making the Case for Graphic Novel Inclusion in Every Classroom" at AASL National Conference. An active member of the Young Adult Library Services Association, she served as chairperson for the 2022 Excellence in Nonfiction Award Committee, and was a blogger for YALSA's 2020 Best Fiction for Young Adults. She also served on YALSA's 2019 Morris Award Committee and 2018 Great Graphic Novels for Teens Selection Committee. Among her recent publications are "An Uncomfortable Truth: The 19th Amendment and the Limits of Women's Suffrage" in *School Library Journal* (August 2020) and several articles published by School Library Connection in 2016 and 2017. She is also adjunct professor at St. John Fisher University and at University at Albany, SUNY, where she teaches courses focused on young adult literature.

make them shine on our shelves by continually managing the collection, a process that includes what comes in (selection) as much as what goes out (weeding). And third, we elevate our profession through this work. Yes, a librarian is usually a tech guru and a competent teacher, but at the heart of it, librarians are still associated with books. I'm more than okay with that, and so should you be. Let's make our link with books count.

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When to Lead & When to Manage:

**BALANCING
LOFTY GOALS
WITH DAY-TO-
DAY TASKS IN
THE SCHOOL
LIBRARY**



Megan Musick

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The two legendary Margarets ran the Scott County High School Library for years. They had the help of a library aide. The adjoining ninth-grade school also had a full-time librarian and an aide. That is five staff members for grades 9 through 12. Fast forward to present day where there is just me for all four grade levels. This is a reality for many schools around the country. As school librarians, we're taking on more and more with less help.

When I was first hired as the Scott County High School librarian, I had many lofty goals. I was going to make the library the hub of the school! I was going to collaborate with every teacher in the building and help them make curriculum and co-teach with them! I was going to help with the yearbook! I was going to teach ENG 101 and 102! I was going to do book talks! I was going to collaborate with the public library! I was going to make all new displays and totally reorganize the library space! I was going to build a makerspace! You get the idea. Fast forward to one week into being the librarian. I was overwhelmed with phone calls, e-mails, and people dropping in. I felt like I was just putting out small fires and never accomplishing anything. My brain was frazzled because I was going from one task to another with no downtime in

between, and I could hardly focus on anything before facing another interruption. I quickly realized something had to be done.

Last year, I enrolled in a six-week online leadership class taught by Hilda Weisburg, a national leader in librarianship. This class completely changed my mindset, my work ethic, the way I plan, and what I do on a daily basis and why I do it. I want to share with you some of Hilda's life-changing tips and show you how I integrated them into my library in the hope they will help you if you are also struggling to balance your lofty goals with your day-to-day tasks. I want you to come away with a new passion for your school library, feel invigorated knowing there is hope for balancing everything on your to-do lists that may currently seem overwhelming, and gain practical tips that you could implement tomorrow if you wanted to. I am on this journey now and want to take you along with me.

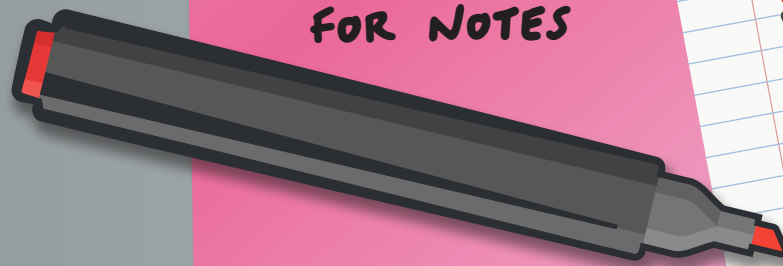
Getting Grounded

Imagine this scenario: You finish the school day and know that you were very busy that day, but you have no idea what you actually accomplished. You spent the day responding to tasks that just popped up. Sound familiar? Hilda Weisburg

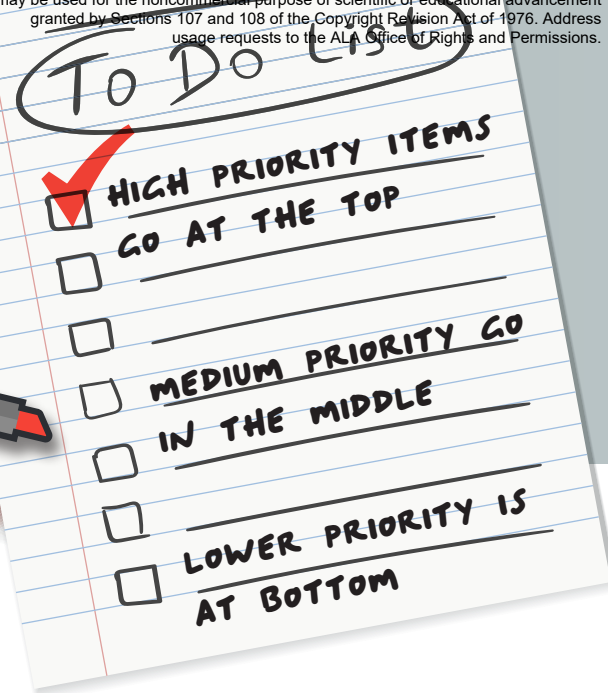
suggests that the best way to overcome feeling overwhelmed or like you are just holding everything together with duct tape is to get grounded. To do this, you need a mission statement and possibly a vision statement.

Imagine this scenario: You finish the school day and know that you were very busy that day, but you have no idea what you actually accomplished. You spent the day responding to tasks that just popped up. Sound familiar?

Ironically, when I first started at Scott County High School, my principal requested that all teachers post their mission statements outside their doors. I used the AASL mission statement verbatim with no thought to my own unique library and posted it without really thinking about it again. When we got a new principal last year, I noticed that about half of the teachers took down their mission



**ALSO USE
GOOGLE KEEP
FOR NOTES**



statements, so I did too. I thought it was just taking up space outside my library doors. After Hilda's mentorship, I quickly realized that a mission statement is a MUST. It is literally why I became a librarian. Not having a mission statement would be like my students writing an essay without a thesis statement. What would even be the point?

"The school library program provides a positive environment, encouraging students to love reading, and develops their abilities to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, and effective users and producers of ideas, while guiding them to become lifelong learners."

To develop my mission statement, I started with some of Hilda's examples and then thought about my own library as well as myself as a librarian. My mission statement became: "The school library program provides a positive environment, encouraging students to love reading, and

develops their abilities to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, and effective users and producers of ideas, while guiding them to become lifelong learners." What did I do with that mission statement? First, I used Canva to design an eye-catching poster featuring the mission statement, made three color printouts, and hung them in visible places: outside the library doors, on the wall behind the circulation desk, and on the cabinet next to my computer in my back office. I plan on memorizing it and posting it to my library website as well. At the end of each school year, I will look back on it and see if what I did that year helped to meet these goals. I will also tweak the mission statement if needed.

Hilda suggests you can take your vision for the library one step further by also developing a vision statement. If your mission statement is what you do on a daily basis, your vision statement is the ideal version of your library. I thought back to every librarian job interview I had ever had. In every single one, I described my ideal library as the "hub" of the school. I quickly realized that this was my dream for the library, and so it became the foundation for my vision statement. Using a thought process similar to that for my mission statement, I developed a vision statement: "The school

library is the hub of the school, where collaboration, reading for pleasure, and high-quality resources help students and staff achieve their academic and personal goals."

By keeping my vision and mission statements in the back of my mind every day during every task I do, I no longer feel like I'm putting out small fires. Ideally, all the tasks I do fit in with my goals. If they don't, I ask myself why I'm even doing them and whether I could delegate the tasks to someone else or do them at a later time or in a different way. This new way of thinking about my daily tasks has truly made me a better librarian and has even made me happier!

"The school library is the hub of the school, where collaboration, reading for pleasure, and high-quality resources help students and staff achieve their academic and personal goals."

Leading vs. Managing

Now that you have a vision and mission statement, you can start balancing your overall goals that rely on leading with your daily tasks that focus on managing. You need to know the difference between leading and managing, and as Hilda suggests, you **MUST** be aware of when you are doing each. "The leader's role is innovative, setting the vision. The manager carries out the mission. A leader challenges the status quo, while the manager works with the status quo. A leader takes the long-term view. A manager works in the here and now" (Weisburg 2017, 90). So when do you lead and when do you manage? The secret is that you need to do both with intention and know which one you are doing during each task you perform.

So when do you lead and when do you manage? The secret is that you need to do both with intention and know which one you are doing during each task you perform.

I took Hilda's advice and developed two or three long-term goals as part of a multiyear strategic plan. This process entailed putting on my leadership hat and really envisioning my ideal library. The long-term goals I developed will be my ongoing focus for the next two to three years. Then, I made sure to have a yearly action plan that moved the goals forward. I have more-specific goals for each nine weeks, but I don't beat myself up if I don't meet them; I can always carry them over to the next nine

weeks. I also use a library calendar that tells what holidays and special events are observed each week/month (Mental Health Awareness Month, Banned Books Week, etc.). This helps tremendously in planning ahead for displays and special events. I know I am leading when I am choosing which events to celebrate and how to celebrate them. I know I am managing when I am creating the displays, delegating tasks to my student aides, and dealing with any hands-on tasks. I am actively aware of whether the tasks I am doing are leading or managing.

I also use a library program planner and extend its use to other major projects beyond programming. Last year, I not only used it to plan Readapalooza, an afterschool one-time book club event at which each book group is led by a faculty member, but also to plan for collecting books at the end of the year. I use the planner to track my goals for the event I am planning as well as the resources I will need and specific tasks that will have to be done, each of which I assign a due date. I also use Google Keep (which I will discuss further later) to organize my daily tasks. Using all of these planning tools allows me to have a focus each day and makes managing seem more meaningful. At the end of each day and year, I can now confidently say what it is that I have accomplished.

Time Management

I have talked a lot about leading and planning, but what about the daily grind? How can you possibly accomplish all that you need to while also taking on a leadership role and addressing all of the e-mails, phone calls, and walk-ins you receive each day? It's no surprise that Hilda's

tips focus on time management, including making to-do lists and delegating.

For my to-do list, I have relied on Google Keep for three years now. This tool has completely changed my life! I cannot recommend it more highly. I can best equate it to using sticky notes, but imagine they are digital and not crowding your desk, and you have the ability to shuffle them around. Pre-Hilda Megan simply added more and more items to the to-do list with no thought to organization or priority. In fact, I even ignored tasks I had previously been so excited to begin because they were at the bottom of the list! Hilda's class helped me to see that my list desperately needed to be organized based on priority. I now place high-priority tasks at the top of the list. Then I skip a line and place my medium-priority items. Finally, I skip another line and list my bottom-tier priorities. I select the option to add checkboxes because who doesn't love a satisfying checkmark when they've completed a task? You can also see all of your completed tasks with a strikethrough at the bottom of the note. This comes in handy if you do the same task multiple times





or



since you can just uncheck it to re-add it to your list. I also love the feature that allows you to move items around in case their priority changes.

As a high school librarian, I have a flexible schedule. Thus,

I have found that it is incredibly beneficial for me to have a daily handwritten to-do list organized down to the hour. This may seem like overkill since I also have a to-do list on Google Keep, but the handwritten list truly keeps me from wasting any time. Either the day before or the morning of, I make a list of what I hope to accomplish divided into each period of the day—keeping in mind my mission statement all the while, of course! The handwritten daily list allows me to visualize my entire day and see when exactly I will achieve each of the goals at the top of my to-do list. Yes, other tasks will pop up throughout the day, so I make sure not to overbook myself. Unless these impromptu tasks are extremely time sensitive, I can always put them on tomorrow's list.

Hilda also recommends choosing a task based on how much time you have (Weisburg 2017, 25). In the beginning, I made the rookie mistake of starting a large project when I would only have twenty minutes before the next class came in. Then I had to stop, lose my focus, try to focus on something else, and then refocus later. This quickly became exhausting. It turns out brains aren't meant to quickly jump from task to task! After my leadership class, I became increasingly aware of how I was utilizing short chunks of time. If I know I have only five or ten minutes before I have another obligation, I choose a task to complete that I am confident I can

complete in that amount of time (answering an e-mail, checking on the status of a book order, covering a book or two, etc.). I save the larger tasks for when I have longer periods of uninterrupted time. This seems so obvious in retrospect, but it just wasn't something I was doing. What a game changer!

Finally, I had to take Hilda's advice to heart and learn that not everything has to be perfect—and done by me. I could delegate tasks to others and learn to trust them to complete the tasks. Throughout the day last year, I had fifteen student aides. Fifteen! And what were they doing? Mostly staffing the circulation desk and shelving books. But with that kind of help, think of the possibilities! This is what Hilda helped me to see. I was going to have to take a risk and entrust more tasks to others if I wanted to have the time to achieve the lofty goals I envisioned. This delegating was more successful in some cases than in others. Covering paperback books with laminate proved impossible for some student aides; it turned out that I just needed to find the right ones with the necessary skills and attention to detail. I also learned that I had some very artistic, creative aides who could make wonderful displays for the front window cases. All of this taught me that in the years to come, I will take stock of my library aides' strengths and weaknesses at the very beginning of the school year so that I can more effectively utilize this incredible, enthusiastic workforce.

Finally, I had to take Hilda's advice to heart and learn that not everything has to be perfect—and done by me.

A Balanced Life

Perhaps the most important lesson Hilda taught me was that I need to lead a balanced life. I have a YouTube channel "Manuscripts, Musick, and More" with over five hundred subscribers. (Please check it out!) I watch countless hours of BookTube. I read as much as I can daily. I am always on Goodreads. I check my e-mail incessantly and read librarian Facebook group posts every single time I open the app all year round! Hilda showed me that this is no way to be a leader. You want to show other librarians that you lead a balanced life, which will actually help encourage them to be leaders too by realizing that they don't have to be workaholics to be good leaders (Weisburg 2017, 145). That being said, I have spent this summer working on a presentation, the yearbook, and now this article. I have less than a month before the school year begins anew, so peace out! I'm going to go enjoy this time and know that I will be a better librarian for it.



Megan Musick is the library media specialist at Scott County (KY) High School in Georgetown, where she lives with

her husband and seventeen-month-old son. Megan recently presented at the KASL Summer Refresher, and you can visit her YouTube channel, "Manuscripts, Musick, and More" at www.youtube.com/channel/UCooh89Boksg8g10o1Nls8Uw.

Work Cited:

Weisburg, Hilda K. 2017. *Leading for School Librarians: There Is No Other Option*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman / ALA.



Cultivating an Equitable School Library to Nurture Critical Curators

Use this infographic to help guide conversation with administrators and other educators about the importance of developing curation skills in learners supported by inclusive school library collections. Find scenarios, activities, and tools to support curation practice in *Developing Critical Curators Seeking Diverse Perspectives*. Visit standards.aasl.org/project/curators.

NATIONAL
SCHOOL
LIBRARY
STANDARDS



Providing equitable and adequate school library services and instruction has become **AN ISSUE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE**, especially when we see that schools in the poorest and most racially diverse communities have the **LEAST ACCESS TO LIBRARY SERVICES**.¹ (Pribesh, Gavigan, & Dickinson 2011)

RESEARCH

“IN TODAY’S AGE OF FAKE NEWS, knowing where to turn for **RELIABLE DATA**—and being able to distinguish between **objective and biased sources**—might just be one of the **MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS** of our time.”²



42% of Americans ages 18 to 29 say they **GET THEIR NEWS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA**.³

FALSEHOODS

70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than the truth

COLLABORATION

90,400 K-12 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS



- **82,300 (91%)** have SCHOOL LIBRARIES
- **56,000 (61%)** have full-time LIBRARIANS^{4a-6b}

60+ studies demonstrate strong school libraries’ **POSITIVE IMPACT** on student achievement, yet cutbacks may be yielding unintended consequences.⁷

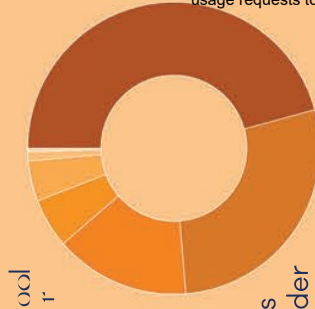


SPONSORED CONTENT vs. NEWS ARTICLE

80% of middle schoolers cannot tell the difference.⁸

DIVERSITY

49.4 MILLION STUDENTS preK-12 public school enrollment (2020)¹



- 22.6 M** White
- 13.8 M** Hispanic
- 7.4 M** Black
- 2.7 M** Asian
- 2.2 M** Multi-racial
- 0.5 M** Native races
- 0.2 M** Pacific Islander

- 7.3 M** Special Ed (2019)¹²
- 5.0 M** English Learners (2018)¹²
- 1.9 M** LGBTQIA+ (ages 13-17)¹³



729 CHALLENGES to education materials and services¹⁴

AND FALSEHOODS
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1,500 people
6x faster.⁴

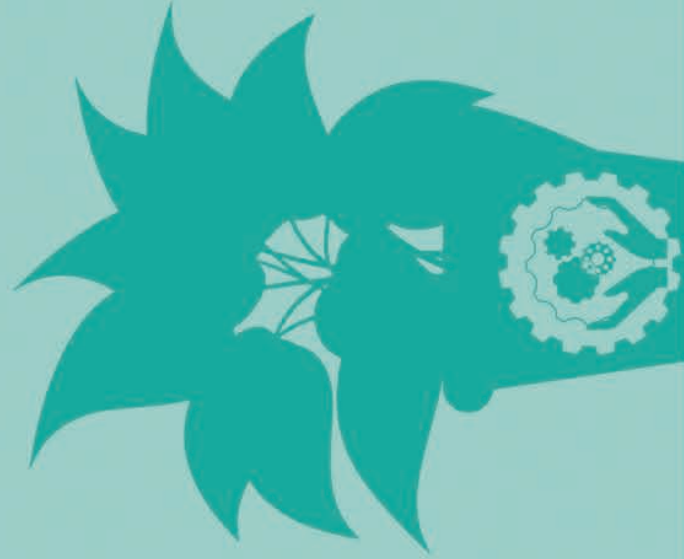
“K-12 DIGITAL CURATION is
about **pointing [learners]** to content
and resources they might not
themselves discover with their own
intuitive strategies... [and **teaching**
organization of] content and tools **to**
MANAGE OUR DIGITAL
LIVES as information citizens.”⁵



Combined **expertise and perspectives**
through COLLABORATIVE INSTRUCTION
create unique opportunities for learners.⁹



LEARNERS' WILLINGNESS
to ask for assistance with
an **INFORMATION NEED**
increased following
collaborative instruction
with the school librarian.¹⁰



Find infographic sources listed under Works Cited in the
Developing Critical Curators Seeking Diverse Perspectives
Activity Guide. Visit standards.aasl.org/project/curators



American Association
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TRANSFORMING LEARNING



1,597+ INDIVIDUAL BOOKS
challenged or removed
MOST TARGETED BOOKS were by
or about Black or LGBTQIA+ persons

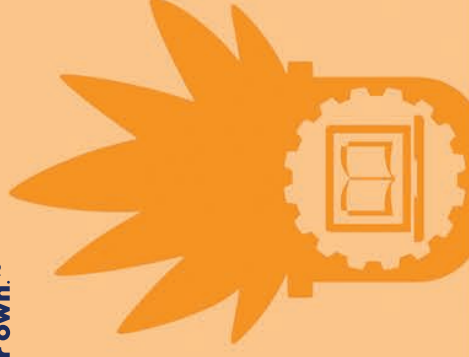
**THE LESS DIVERSE THE STUDENT
BODY, THE MORE INCLUSIVE THE
LIBRARY COLLECTION MUST BE.**

U.S. public school students, especially
white students, tend to go to schools
where their **classmates share their**
racial or ethnic background.¹⁵

**IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY,
LEARNERS & PARENTS**



- feel valued when they
see their **culture**
represented.¹⁶
- must hear stories and interact with
characters whose **lives and**
experiences are different from
their own.¹⁶



How I Solve Problems in the School Library with Intention

Michael Rawls

mike@thebookwrangler.com



When I began my career as a school librarian four years ago (after having taught grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 for the previous 18 years), I took time to live with the collection and the school library the way I inherited it. I lived with systems that were already in place. And during that first year, I observed. That period of observation and living with things as they were allowed me to start innovating and problem-solving from an informed position. It was a time that allowed me to see what glitches in the existing systems arose, and it was a time for me to plot—with intention—how to solve those problems, how to make the library more user-friendly and more accessible. I hope sharing my problems and solutions will help you create a better space for you and your patrons, or perhaps invite you to intentionally observe and seek out problems and solutions in your school library.

And the Category Is...

One of the first major problems I tackled was the A-to-Z alpha-by-author organization of the chapter book fiction section. Shelves and shelves and shelves of book spines from Applegate to Yolen barely called to students who would wander up and down the shelves not knowing where to stop, where to begin their browsing. No separation, no distinction, just books upon books. At the time I began working as the school librarian, I was also

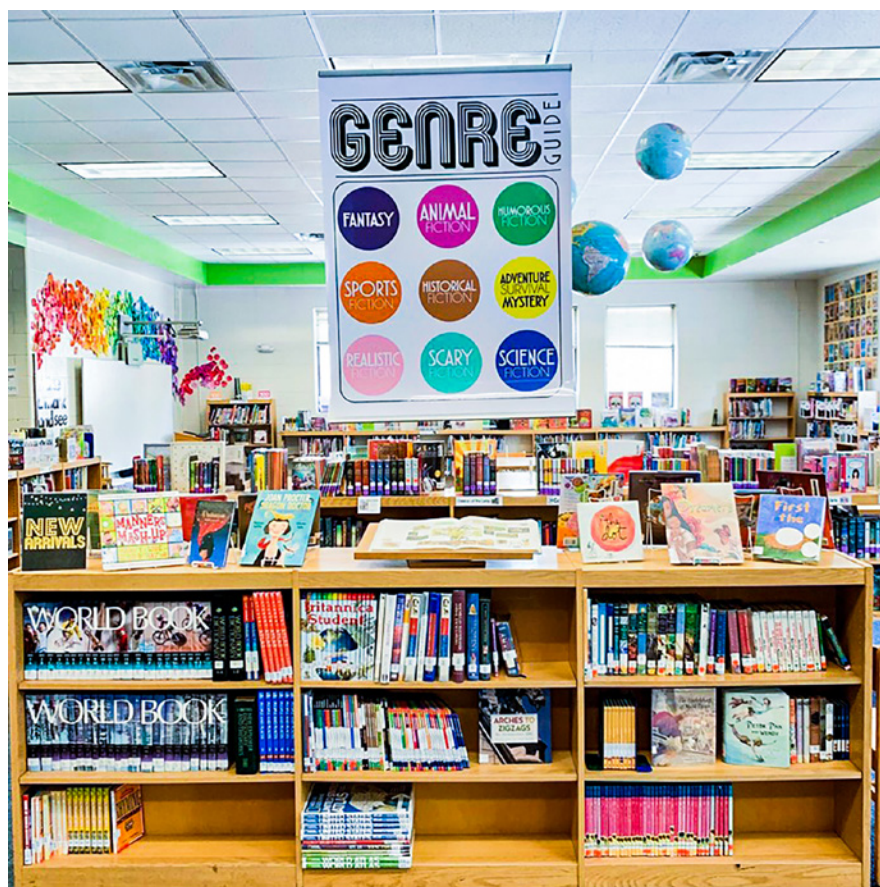


Figure 1. Color-coded spine labels to help learners find their next reads.

taking courses for my Master of Education in school library media where I had been introduced to the idea of genrefication. With nowhere to direct students based on their interests, at the end of year one I decided to genrefy our chapter book fiction section. I chose nine genres: adventure/survival/mystery, animal fiction, fantasy, historical

fiction, humorous fiction, realistic fiction, scary fiction, science fiction, and sports fiction. I also pulled out popular series with a large number of books—think *Magic Tree House*, *Geronimo Stilton*, *Goddess Girls*, *My Weird School*—to be in their own section of the library. The nine genres were given color-coded spine labels (see figure 1), and each genre remained in alpha-by-author organization. Now, once a child liked a book from a particular genre, it was easy to refer them back to that section of chapter book fiction, which was easily identifiable by the color-coded spine and matching signage. Kids caught on fast and started independently finding new books within a well-loved genre. Happy readers and happy school librarian, as exposure to new titles is one of our goals.

Kids caught on fast and started independently finding new books within a well-loved genre. Happy readers and happy school librarian, as exposure to new titles is one of our goals.

Don't Leave the Library Empty Handed

Another year-one hitch that presented itself was observing kids coming to the school library in search of a *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book only to find the shelf where they were housed empty or missing the specific title they wanted. Instead of searching for something else, I would spy them leaving empty-handed. Even though we had other great, humorous titles similar in style to the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* titles within our collection, the kids were still leaving without checking out anything else.

The solution was to make a read-alike menu to post on the shelf where the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series lived. The sign read, "If you like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, you might also like..." accompanied by images of several book covers of similar titles by other authors. I could refer students to the sign and get them to check out other books—often in series—that they discovered could be just as entertaining as Greg Heffley and his creator Jeff Kinney. Let me be clear. I did not invent read-alike menus. These have been around long before I became a school librarian, but what I found after implementing them with the Kinney books is that they work. So, I began creating more and more of them until I had enough to put in protective plastic sleeves and house in a notebook titled *What Should I Read Next* (see figure 2). I even expanded it to topics like "If you like tearjerkers" or "Books for Dog Lovers." It became a go-to source for recommending books, and now kids weren't leaving empty-handed. Another of our goals as school librarians accomplished.

Which Book Comes Next?

A common question I heard pop up continuously my first year was, "Do you know which book comes next



Figure 2. *What Should I Read Next* menus.

I was happy to find that tackling each of the problems I was intentionally solving made my little patrons more self-sufficient because I was intentionally addressing their needs.

in this series?" Many series have numbered the spines or covers or both so that a book's sequence in the series is easily identifiable, but now and then some don't. Of course, my go-to was to stop and search Google to find out the correct order, but even those few minutes of pause were stealing time from more-important work. The solution? I made "Read Them in Order" shelf signs for popular series. These ended up

serving dual purposes. One, the shelf signs helped kids easily identify the order of a series without having to ask. Similar to the read-alike menus, these shelf signs showed images of the titles' book covers in the order they were meant to be read. Secondly, these signs acted as advertisements. They appeared on various shelves where the series lived, drawing the attention of students curious about the signs and the book

cover images, and I hope, enticing them to start by checking out book number one in a series. Now, rather than my pausing to search the Web for the answer, students could be directed to the shelf signs to discover which book to read next.

A Library Rail System for Wayfinding

I was happy to find that tackling each of the problems I was intentionally solving made my little patrons more self-sufficient because I was intentionally addressing their needs. This past school year, although I had three primary sections—picture book fiction, chapter book fiction, and nonfiction—I still felt like I was spending too much time stepping into the stacks to lead students to books. I needed to find a way to give directions that wouldn't take me away from my central post in the school library where I was fielding questions, keeping an eye on the library, and checking out books. My solution came in the form of a subway train map. I recalled the New York City subway maps with their colored lines marking their routes. I decided a similar system could be used in the library: "Take the blue line to the yellow line to find animal nonfiction" or "Take the blue line to the red line to get to the biography section" or "The blue line dead ends at graphic novels."

My school library floors are carpeted so I found rolls of different color Velcro tape to make my library subway system. With the addition of shapes and symbols like triangles, hearts, circles, and stars, I could say, "Take the blue line to the purple star line and read the signs" or "Take the blue line to the purple circle line and then read the shelf signs for volcanoes and earthquakes." The system has been helpful with directing patrons to the general area where they should be searching

without my having to personally take them to the shelf. Again, learner independence comes when we intentionally design systems to allow them to be self-sufficient in their searches.

Give Kids Choice in the Library

One final problem I will share was that (gasp!) not every child was an eager, voracious reader. I would observe students who wandered during checkout time. While some kids were natural readers who could select books with ease and sit and enjoy reading in peace, other kids didn't know what to do with that time and often wasted most of it either leaving empty-handed or grabbing something as a last-ditch effort to leave the library with *something* better than nothing. And it was also during

those aimless walks up and down the aisles that behavior issues would often present themselves. That's when I decided to offer some other choices for the second half of the class period.

Book checkout and reading are always offered as a priority choice during that time, but I started offering some other choices to those who were happier being a little more active. For example, rather than have the step-by-step drawing books sit unused on the shelf, I put them at a table with markers, rulers, colored pencils, and blank paper. More kids started leaving with drawing books. I did the same with the origami books, providing origami paper for students to fold using the how-to books as guides. I searched for more and more ways to make books "active," so to speak. I even used part of my budget

Again, learner independence comes when we intentionally design systems to allow them to be self-sufficient in their searches.



to purchase small Lego kits with the rationale that even reading the diagrams in the instruction booklets was important reading. I would display books about the inventor of Legos and books about creating mosaics with Legos at these centers too, and before long, those books were disappearing. Chessboards were out alongside books that explained the rules and all the pieces and the ways they could move across the board. When a disagreement about the game came up, I'd have kids refer to a book to settle disputes. I was sneaking in reading in these small moments, and kids were learning that books could do more than entertain or provide information for a report. Books could teach you how to do something new or how to become better at the things you love doing. And suddenly, those behavior issues started to dwindle because students love choice.

I discovered I could give them those choices and still make the choices be all about books.

It's a Process

Every year I still intentionally seek out ways to solve problems that arise in the school library. One problem that always needs fresh solutions is exposure to new books. Kids can get in a reading rut, so I'm forever inventing or reinventing ways to get kids picking up and reading new—or new-to-them—titles. I invite you to take some time to observe and take note of the problems that occur for your patrons. Then, take some more time to start planning solutions to those problems.

Perhaps I've offered you some ideas here, or perhaps my ideas have spurred your thinking, and you can reinvent or remix some of my solutions to serve you, your

library, and your patrons. When you intentionally seek out ways to maximize your library systems and procedures, you make books—and the world—more accessible to your patrons.

For more ideas on how to be intentional in your school library space, follow me on Instagram or Twitter @thebookwrangler or check out my blog at www.thebookwrangler.com.



Michael Rawls is school librarian at Morningside Elementary School in Atlanta (GA) Public Schools. He was named the

Atlanta Public Schools School Library Media Specialist of the year for the 2021–2022 school year as well as a Master Teacher of the Month by Epic! in February 2021.

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ARTICLE



POWER AND POSSIBILITIES OF PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS



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How can schools enhance learning and make 21st-century knowledge development more meaningful for teachers and students? School leaders, including librarians, can easily tap into a variety of partnerships with community stakeholders to maximize results.

As K–12 schools strive to enhance education for their students while enabling educators to focus on core competencies, schools must look toward strategic partnerships with outside groups and organizations. Partnerships with families, libraries, museums, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and subject matter experts hold the promise of a brighter future and more-engaging educational experiences for today's K–12 students. These partnerships enable schools, librarians, and other educators to expand teaching tools, and enhance and deepen students' learning experiences. The "National School Library Standards Crosswalk with Future Ready Librarians" calls for cultivating community partnerships such as these within the school and local community to promote engagement and a community of readers (AASL 2018). Future ready librarians must think about how to develop community partnerships to prepare students for college and their careers.

To be successful in their lives beyond school, students need to develop skills and abilities that enable them to become proficient creators, collaborators, communicators, and critical thinkers (Cohen 2019; NEA 2015; Renzulli 2012). These skills must be taught in addition to "traditional" subject areas and other skills students need to become active world citizens and part of the global workforce. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) refers to these skills as the 4 Cs: creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking (Battelle for Kids. n.d.). These skills prepare students for the twenty-first century while building their readiness for future success.

Importance of Teaching 21st-Century Skills

Not only are creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical-thinking skills needed by learners at all grade levels, but according to Lotta C. Larson and Teresa Northern Miller (2011) and Elena Silva (2009), they should be integrated across all curricula. These are not truly "new" skills; however, they are "newly important as today's advancements in computers and automation require workers to be able to find and analyze information across multiple sources and use this

information to make decisions and create new ideas" (Larson and Miller 2011, 121–22). Even critics of an emphasis on teaching 21st-century skills, such as the Core Knowledge Foundation, agree "learning factual knowledge and the ability to apply, analyze, and create new knowledge go hand-in-hand" (Silva 2009, 632).

Today's students need skills that differ from those of previous generations. As businesses and society move toward "knowledge creation" rather than simply improving on existing technologies and practices, it is incumbent upon the educational system to guide young people in the creation of knowledge to participate fully in this new reality (Cohen 2019, 38). While traditional means of educating students still have a place within current and future classrooms, learners will be prepared for life outside of the classroom only if these traditional methods are used in conjunction with new processes for teaching and learning that incorporate 21st-century skills across the curriculum.

Ways to Help Students Develop Skills They Need

To foster the development of knowledge and skills students will need for future success, Anna

Rosefsky Saavedra and V. Darleen Opfer (2012) have described nine lessons relevant to teaching 21st-century skills.

1. Make [the curriculum] relevant [to students' lives].
2. Teach through the disciplines, "including native and foreign languages, hard and social sciences, mathematics and the arts."
3. Develop thinking skills.
4. Encourage learning transfer [across disciplines].
5. Teach students how to learn [on their own].
6. Address misunderstandings directly [about how the world works].
7. Treat teamwork like an outcome.
8. Exploit technology to support learning.
9. Foster creativity. (Saavedra and Opfer 2012, 10–11)

Establishing partnerships with external organizations and entities enables the intentional teaching of these skills in a more active manner, rather than "education practices that are dominated by passive learning of verified true beliefs" (Chai et al. 2015, 390).

Children are inherently curious about the world around them, and offering them opportunities to increase and deepen their learning through an expanded world of possible experiences helps to make that learning more "sticky." John Dewey believed students learn best when engaging in experiences that hold meaning and significance, and Jean Piaget described learning through "scaffolding," in which learners build new knowledge

Enlisting the involvement of students' families—whether as classroom speakers, school volunteers, or at-home reinforcement for school lessons—offers a simple way to take advantage of these partnerships.

upon their existing ideas. Providing opportunities to have such experiences through these collaborative partnerships helps students—and their teachers—reach this goal. The National Council for the Social Studies C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) Framework advocates this type of inquiry-based learning and "emphasizes the disciplinary concepts and practices that support students as they develop the capacity to know, analyze, explain, and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in our social world" (NCSS 2017, 6).

Teaching 21st-century skills requires incorporating student-driven experiences through project-based learning activities, often including academic competitions such as National History Day, Science Olympiad, Future Problem Solving, Odyssey of the Mind, and others. This work is enhanced through collaboration with external partners and community members, including librarians, museum educators, university professors, scientists, and historians.

Why Not Enlist the Help of Readily Available Sources Beyond the Classroom?

Using an inquiry-based teaching model to promote project-based "authentic learning" offers tremendous benefits for students. Not only does this type of teaching and learning enhance students' experiences and help instill a love of learning, it enables students to take ownership of their learning while fostering curiosity and deepening understanding. Particularly as schools prepare to return to pre-pandemic models, there are often factors that lead to the need for schools to employ "ready-to-use" curriculum options to serve student needs. Funding constraints, teacher experience levels, differentiation efforts, and equity goals often prompt the need to seek out and employ options that will help learning become more "real" for students more quickly. "Teaching and learning in a twenty-first century context involves making content relevant to life outside of school" (Cramer 2007, 129) and

is facilitated through this type of authentic teaching and means of assessment (Cohen 2019).

Partnerships: Critical Components of This Educational Approach

Administrators, school librarians, teachers, and students can take advantage of external partnerships as a ready-made tool. They should look to embrace these partnerships and the possibilities they offer to most effectively utilize collaborations to successfully integrate 21st-century skills into students' learning. Among these partnerships are those with families, with community entities, and with subject matter experts.

Partnering with Families

A simple partnership immediately available to schools is partnering with families. A partnership between a school library and families of the students it serves can include inviting family members to participate

in read-aloud activities in the school library, organizing a school library advisory board made up of parents/guardians, or working with the school's PTA on library programming and fundraising.

Students whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to earn higher grades, enroll in higher-level programs, pass their classes, attend school regularly, develop better social skills, and graduate on to postsecondary education (Organizing Engagement 2022; Johns Hopkins University 2020). Dr. Joyce Epstein developed a framework outlining six types of family involvement for successful partnerships with schools: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with a community (Johns Hopkins University 2022). Enlisting the involvement of students' families—whether as classroom speakers, school volunteers, or at-home

reinforcement for school lessons—offers a simple way to take advantage of these partnerships.

Partnering with the Community

Educational leaders in the K–12 environment have access to resources beyond their schools or districts for external partnerships to support faculty and student experiences. School librarians can work with their building principals to establish partnerships with community stakeholders, bringing support and expertise for guest speakers from public libraries, academic libraries, museums, and other organizations.

The Lunch and Learn program in co-author Dr. Debra Cohen's middle school classroom brought members of the business community face-to-face with students for career education opportunities. Providing students access to information about careers—giving learners the opportunity to interact in meaningful ways with



scientists, police officers, Peace Corps volunteers, entrepreneurs, chefs, and other professionals—offered these young people the chance to learn about careers in a low-risk, straightforward manner. Opportunities such as these can help guide students' educational choices and better prepare them for future success (Strom 2019). These in-person or virtual collaborations offer opportunities to provide speakers for professional development for faculty, offer research support and access to high quality resources for project-based learning activities, and provide virtual field trips.

Partnering with Other Libraries

Partnership between K–12 schools and various types of libraries is essential. Over 115,000 libraries are in the United States today (ALA 2022). More than 90,000 public and private K–12 schools serve 49.4

million students (NCES 2020; ALA 2019). Increased use of online meeting platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet offers public librarians, school librarians, and academic librarians the ability to connect virtually with any public or private K–12 school across the country (ALA 2019). Providing access to libraries, librarians, and their varied resources beyond the school walls makes possible a more-equitable education, even in America's schools with the most-underserved students.

A partnership between William Paterson University and the Paterson Public Schools in New Jersey has resulted in academic librarians providing virtual professional development for school librarians. Connecting with schools, academic librarians can offer online professional development about subjects ranging from children's literature, project-based learning,

and using library resources, to incorporating technology into teaching. This type of academic library-school library partnership can be a model for universities and schools across the United States.

Student researchers participating in the National History Day (NHD) academic competition have regularly accessed and collaborated with libraries and archives. Dr. Cohen worked with archivists and university librarians to schedule an annual "research day" at Rutgers University's library, enabling NHD participants to begin their research with resources they would not typically be able to access. Additionally, specialized libraries and state archives, such as the Thomas A. Edison Papers at Rutgers University, are useful sources for students looking for primary sources for their research work.



Partnering with Museums

Partnerships with museums and historic sites offer the potential for both in-person and virtual field trip experiences. Not everyone can travel to Cooperstown, New York, yet a one-hour virtual visit with a museum educator from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is available for a \$100 fee and can provide a meaningful experience for students to learn about the history of baseball or racial integration in professional sports (National Baseball Hall of Fame n.d.). Enthusiastic, knowledgeable local, state, and national museum educators are available to assist students online or in person in supporting their research for in-school projects or academic competitions. Additionally, opportunities for these projects to be exhibited in person or through museums' websites or social media accounts offer students authentic

learning experiences as they share their work with a larger audience. This has been a successful feature of the National History Day program, which has previously shared students' work within the exhibit halls of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History (National History Day 2018).

Museum educators are available to conduct professional development for K–12 educators to enable them to bring unique teaching methods and perspectives to their students as both teachers and students learn about the museums' subject matter. These museum educators also support project-based learning experiences for students. An example of this can be seen through a partnership between museum educators at the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park and the Paterson Public Schools through William Paterson University's Professional Development Schools Network's Batter Up grant supported by

Michelle Hamlett, a history teacher at Eastside High School and Dina Scacchetti, a Professor-in-Residence. This partnership led to high school students researching the history of the Negro Leagues; Larry Doby, a Paterson alumnus and Hall of Fame MLB player; and Hinchliffe Stadium, one of the last Negro League stadiums in the United States. Not only does this type of partnership help museums and historic sites fulfill their missions, it expands opportunities for them to promote their collections and educational services.

Partnering with Businesses and Nonprofits

Partnerships with businesses and nonprofit organizations offer an opportunity for financial support as well as for subject expertise. Whether students are learning about living a healthy lifestyle from a local healthcare or fitness provider, or receiving a lesson in estimating square footage inside a moving van from the local moving company, these unique collaborations can make learning more engaging for students as they understand the real-world applications of their classroom learning. What better way is there for students learning about entrepreneurship, accounting, the stock market, and other aspects of running a business than to learn from members of the business community who work with these concepts every day?

School partnerships with businesses also have the potential to yield volunteers for reading programs such as the Real Men Read literacy initiative that originated in the Chicago Public Schools in 2006. There are recognized benefits when men from outside a school are involved in the education

Providing access to libraries, librarians, and their varied resources beyond the school walls makes possible a more-equitable education, even in America's schools with the most-underserved students.

of, and literacy efforts on behalf of, America's children (Grimes 2021). Co-author Neil Grimes, who started the Real Men Read initiative at William Paterson University in March of 2020 believes it can increase K–12 students' interest in reading while providing support for their overall reading activities at participating schools in northern New Jersey.

Collaborations with businesses and nonprofit organizations also have the possibility of providing job-shadowing experiences for K–12 students, potentially resulting in academic scholarships, as well as program sponsorship, and subsidized attendance for faculty at professional conferences and workshops. Depending upon the types of businesses involved, these partnerships can also provide sponsorship or funding for school resources, whether in the form of books and computers, guest speakers, or curricular materials.

Partnering with Subject Matter Experts

Partnerships with subject matter experts provide both students and educators the opportunity to learn from leaders in an unlimited number of fields. University professors, scientific researchers, engineers, mathematicians, artists, musicians, and historians can provide unique professional development opportunities for K–12 teachers. These experts are often available to speak directly with students to share their knowledge and introduce young learners to information that is unique to specific professions. The concept of "Career Day" can expand to enhance the educational experience of both K–12 students and their teachers while offering students a glimpse into the skills they will need for future careers. School librarians can lead efforts

at their schools to recruit subject matter experts to speak virtually or in person with classes and students at any grade level. More than 65 percent of today's young people will work in jobs that don't currently exist (World Economic Forum 2016). Varied opportunities to learn about careers provide students with invaluable insights into the range of college and career possibilities and with new appreciation for the importance of skills that can help people adapt to evolving workplace expectations and challenges.

Moving Forward

To be properly prepared for college and career, students must develop the 21st-century skills that are

integral to functioning within society. Creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking are essential skills for students' success. For the sake of their students, school librarians can initiate partnerships with families, community entities, and subject matter experts to help equip students with needed skills and knowledge. Librarians can also serve as leaders to give other educators opportunities to tap into these readily available resources to enhance students' and teachers' educational experiences. It's time for school librarians to take the initiative and make the most of these collaborative opportunities for our students, for whatever their future holds.



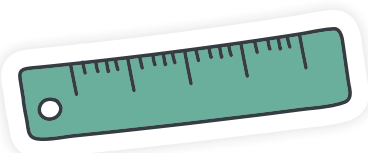
Neil D. Grimes is the Education and Curriculum Materials Librarian at the David and Lorraine Cheng Library at William Paterson

University and serves as the library liaison for Education Leadership and Teacher Education: Pre–K–12. A former school librarian, he presented "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" at the 2021 AASL National Conference. He is the author of "Real Men Read—A Library Led Reading Initiative Program" published in 2021 by College & Undergraduate Libraries. He currently serves on ALA's Education and Behavioral Sciences Section Curriculum Materials Center Committee as well as the New Jersey Library Association's Professional Development Committee and the NJLA College and University Section/ Association of College and Research Libraries Marketing and Outreach Committee.



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ARTICLE

LIBRARIAN IN THE HUDDLE

*Student Book Clubs for Athletes,
Leaders, and Reluctant Readers*

Jessica Fitzpatrick

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You might not think of the school library when you think of high school football, especially high school football in Texas. However, at Mayde Creek High School we do. The athletic department and the school library have been collaborating to build literacy and leadership skills among the athletes on the varsity football team, and both the boys' and girls' varsity basketball teams through collaborative leadership book studies that are also sports-focused. Because of the success of our collaborative program, we have been able to extend it as a school-wide program that the coaches and school librarian lead. As the program has been extended, it has become even more popular and effective.

Inspiration

The Librarian in the Huddle program started simply because of a desire to get our athletes interested in the school library. The athletes on our campus are so incredibly busy with their sports—often more than one—plus schoolwork, home-life, and just trying to be a teenager that the passion for reading or doing book clubs sometimes falls by the wayside. As a former coach, I knew

the importance of the athletes on the campus. They are looked up to by younger students, their peers, and the staff. Athletes are such an impactful part of the school culture that they can also be effective ambassadors for the library and literacy. I knew that if I could get the athletes reading more and feeling invested in the school library, their interest and advocacy would make a huge difference on our campus for both reading and the library. If the student-athletes buy into the school library, it will bring even more students to the library, growing the library's impact on learners. I wanted to come up with a program that would align with the athletes' focus on sports while also building leadership skills that would benefit all students on our campus. The idea of Librarian in the Huddle was born: a student-athlete leadership book study that would meet the students where they are, in sports.

Plan

Students look up to coaches on the high school level—to be completely honest, even on the junior high/middle school level. Because of the time that coaches spend with students on their teams outside of the

The Librarian in the Huddle program started simply because of a desire to get our athletes interested in the school library.

classroom, coaches are often able to create relationships with the students that are different than relationships between classroom teachers and learners. To make the most successful team possible, coaches build relationships with their athletes to create a team atmosphere. Because of how impactful the coaches can be, I knew I needed their buy-in for the new library program to be successful. Before even approaching the coaches, I wanted to have a plan in place so I would be able to show them a product and be able to describe an outcome. I gathered a variety of sports leadership books, added them to the collection, and then approached our campus athletic director and told him about my idea of starting a book club for student-athletes that would



focus on leadership. I also showed him the sports leadership books geared toward young adults now in the school library collection. We narrowed the list of book club titles to:

- Jeremy Bhandari's *Trust The Grind*
- John Willkom's *Walk-On Warrior*
- Jeff Janssen's *The Team Captain's Leadership Manual*
- Vernon Brundage Jr.'s *Shoot Your Shot*

I broke down each step of the process that I planned: meeting with the athletes on each team every other week, each time discussing a different part of the book that team was reading. I proposed that by using a sports leadership book we would not only be encouraging reading with a book of interest to students but also building better leaders on and off the field. The athletic director loved the plan, and together we collaborated to come up with a program that he and I thought would best benefit our students, staff, and community. We had fifty football

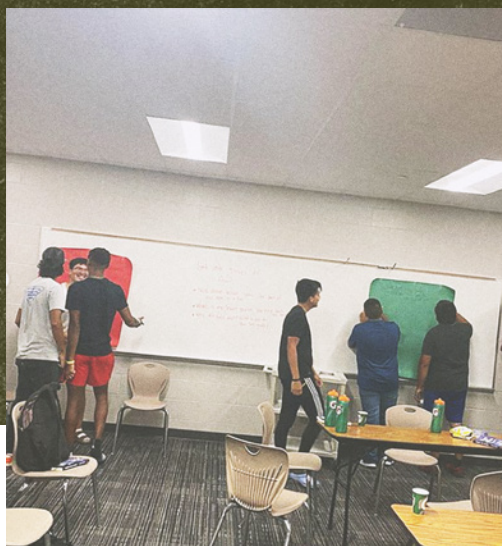
players and fifteen to twenty players on each basketball team. The athletic director and I wanted to be able to reach every student based on the sport that they played, and select books accordingly: for example, basketball books for the basketball players. We also wanted to involve the coaches: seven for football, two for girls' basketball, and three for boys' basketball.

Funding

Because funding is always so difficult for school libraries, I went to our principal at the time (who was also a former coach) and told him about the idea that the athletic director and I had come up with: a sports leadership book club. To give the participants an idea of what is offered in the

I proposed that by using a sports leadership book we would not only be encouraging reading with a book of interest to students but also building better leaders on and off the field.

school library, I wanted to start with sports leadership titles already in the collection, but I needed the books in greater quantities for the book club program. Prior to meeting with the principal, I obtained quotes from various vendors for the necessary number of sports leadership books that I wanted to purchase for book club participants. I showed the principal the quotes in an effort to have him raise my budget or use funds from his budget for the books. Thankfully, not much persuasion was needed because he loved the idea. He gladly used discretionary funds to pay for the books because he recognized that the program would not only benefit the library and athletic department but also improve campus culture and literacy while



building better leaders within the school.

Implementation

Once the books had arrived, the coaches and I met to create a schedule that would work best for all of us. We would meet every other week, either during a team's athletic class time, after practice, or after the strength and conditioning portion of practice. I had a different meeting time for each team so we could have a sports-specific discussion.

Each time we met, we focused on some part of the book and discussed it. A few of our guiding questions included:

What leaders do you (the students) admire and what qualities make those people great leaders?

Where do you find leaders, sometimes where you would least expect them?

What does it take to be a leader?

How can you be a leader on your team, on campus, and in our community?

What do you have to do to reach your goals?

How do you want to be remembered?

How can reading help you reach your goals for being a leader?

As a group, we discussed these questions each week and reflected on the participants' answers, identifying areas we wanted to focus on most during that meeting. Sometimes we would meet in circles and talk about the book. Other days participants would walk around the gym or classroom, and complete graffiti walls with questions written on them or use FlipGrid as a response tool.

The students' responses were very enlightening, revealing that the participants were very aware of what they can do to grow as individuals and to help our community. Sample responses follow.

"We are nothing without our community and being a good leader made by giving back like by cleaning up our streets, being an example by not doing drugs, and helping others stay out of drugs and gang activity" — Football Student Leader

"Leaders aren't always the loudest or the most seen. Some leaders are the ones you can't see or hear but are doing the most work, like the custodians and lunch ladies



on our campus” — Football Student Leader

“The biggest thing that we can do to be a leader at Mayde Creek is by being kind and supporting others. Too many people are against each other or fight just because. We need more kindness to everyone, especially those who are different from us”— Girls’ Basketball Student Leader

Since we were reading leadership athletic books, I wanted each meeting to include an activity that would build leadership skills. One time I had them write letters to various staff members on our campus who have made a difference. Another time I had them make rubber band bracelets for a local nonprofit organization, and once I had them use old t-shirts to make dog toys for

an animal rescue near our campus. We would talk about what we could do to make a bigger impact on our campus and our community, which were major themes in the books read in the clubs. It was an amazing experience to see the athletes collaborating to see how they could build each other up and build up our campus.

Impact

Our program was incredibly successful. All the athletes from the varsity football team, and the varsity boys and girls basketball teams participated in the book study and were engaged in the discussion, raising questions at every meeting. Among the questions students posed for themselves were:

What can I do to be a better leader at work?

It was an amazing experience to see the athletes collaborating to see how they could build each other up and build up our campus.

What can we do as a team to help the younger teams?

Who at our school doesn’t get the recognition that they deserve, and what can we do to give it to them?

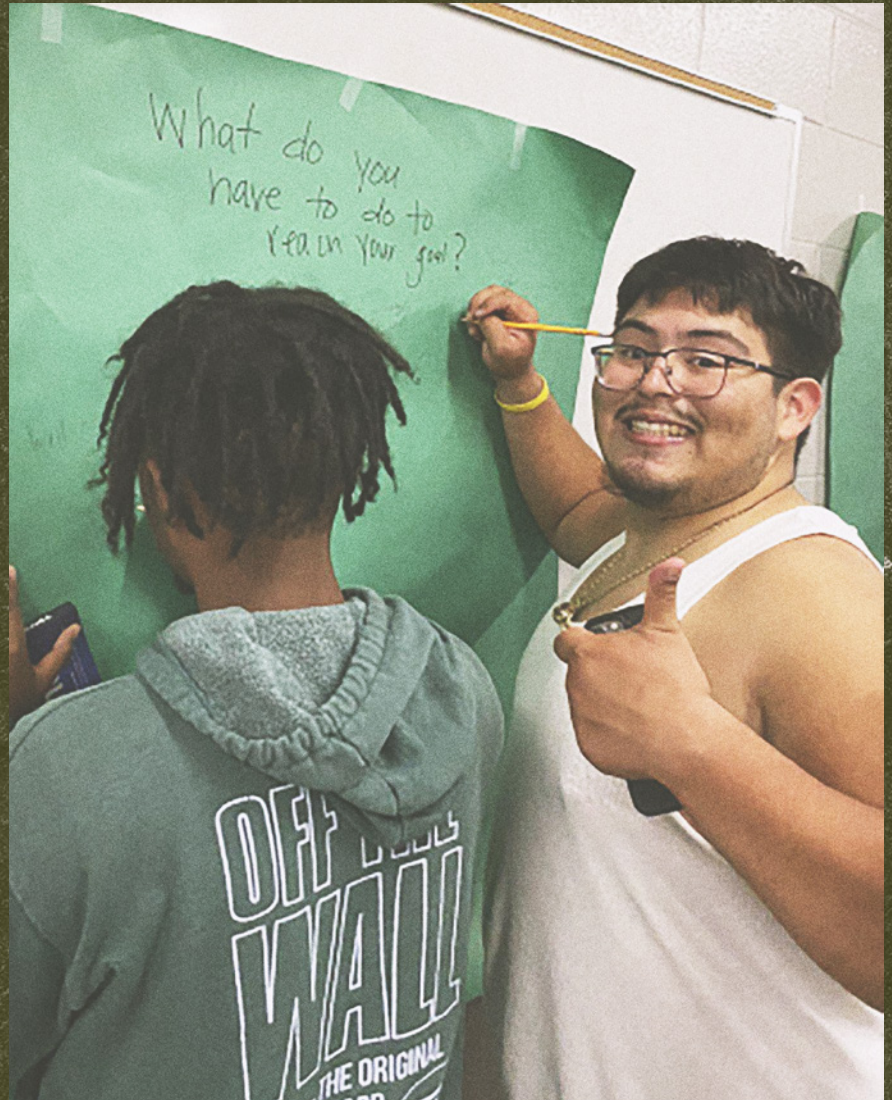
What can I do to help my parents to become better leaders?

Are there more books like this that I can read to keep improving my leadership?

Can you do this with the first-year students to help them be better leaders when they are older?

The students loved that the books showed people like them—people who had come from situations and communities like ours. (Like some of our students, some of the athletes in the books came from lower-income communities.) The students appreciated seeing that even though it can be hard right now juggling school, sports, and life, their efforts are all for something in the end. Many students said they were thinking about the advice in the books, such as being positive and helping others, while they were in their classes and at home. One student said that they put the advice into action and helped their elderly neighbor who was struggling to mow. A senior student is using advice from the book and mentoring a freshman student who was getting into trouble.







The school library's circulation went up 30 percent after the book club was started. Student-athletes also started voluntarily visiting the library and our library events, causing our number of library visitors to grow by 28 percent.

Book clubs and programming that involve books "enable students to learn from the freedoms given, which lead to a deeper understanding of their reading, developing a deeper understanding of other people through their conversations, and providing opportunities to safely fail and celebrate success" (Petrich 2015). This benefit was very apparent throughout our Librarian in the Huddle program. The students created a deeper community with each other through conversations about their book.

The coaches also encouraged book-based studying, and promoted

the idea that reading is important to improve oneself. It never failed to make my day brighter when athletes came into the library during their passing period or during advisory to tell me how much they loved the book club read or to tell me something they were getting out of the book. Seeing how a simple book club program could make such an impact on an influential group of students in the school was truly inspiring. Our coaches also were reaping the rewards. They told me that on the field and on the court students were referring to the books and saying that they are all a team, and we need everyone to be successful. Coaches also noticed student-athletes helping coach each other without prompting. A few coaches even said that the book study had helped them improve their own leadership skills and inspired them to be better.

The school library's circulation went up 30 percent after the book club was started. Student-athletes also started voluntarily visiting the library and our library events, causing our number of library visitors to grow by 28 percent. Our English teachers are seeing more students in our program reading and having higher scores and grade averages than previously. Before we started the book clubs the average grade for student-athletes was 72. After the book clubs became active, that average improved to 81. Student-athletes who are not seniors have been asking us to be sure to continue the book club for next season with new books so they will be able to grow their skills even more. Learners' desire to have more sports-related leadership books also caused me to expand that segment of the collection to better serve my patrons.

So many of the students loved the books that we thought students would re-read them when those learners

needed motivation. Therefore, even though ours is a Title I school, we decided to allow participants to keep the books at the conclusion of our book club season. Many of our students said this was the first book that they ever owned, a statement that had a big impact on the coaches and me, and further increased our desire to grow this program.

Expansion

Because the Librarian in the Huddle was so successful and coaches have such an important role in school culture, as I write this we are moving forward with starting a coaches-led book club that is open to all students. Keeping with the same theme, we plan to call this program A Coach in the Stacks. For this program, once again the library and the athletic department will collaborate. A coach will guide a leadership book study (not sports focused) open to all students and held in the stacks of the library. Because this is a new and different program, we do not yet know what the impact will be. However, we are very optimistic after the positive response to the Librarian in the Huddle program and the positive outcomes.

Five coaches have expressed interest in leading the new groups. To prepare these educators for guiding Coach in the Stacks book clubs, we have been framing questions ahead of time based on the book and mapping out plans and activities prior to the first meetings. All five of the coaches helped me facilitate the Librarian in the Huddle program, so they feel confident about starting to lead their own book clubs. For Coach in the Stacks, I will also be present as an assistant to help the coach as needed, just as they were there for me during Librarian in the Huddle sessions. We are excited to have someone who is not typically associated with literacy lead a book club for all interested students!

To fund this expanded program, we will be pulling funding from a variety of sources: drawing on the library budget and principal's discretionary fund, applying for grants from our district's education foundation, and applying for Texas Library Association grants for programming. If you are interested in starting this program on your campus, I highly recommend looking into grants at your state association level, at the national level, at your district level, or even from local companies.

Looking Ahead

The Librarian in the Huddle has had such a positive impact on the student-athlete participants that we definitely expect to implement this program with the rest of the sports teams at my campus and continue for years to come. I am hopeful and excited to see what the future holds for the athletes and other students on our campus, and how they view the library. Through this program, I was able to advocate for our school library to members of our community, administration, and athletic department. The athletic department became more supportive of the library than ever before because we were working together on an important project. Coaches promoted the school library amongst their athletes and on their social media.

Parents of student-athletes also became more supportive. Many parents who are in the athletic booster club come to campus to volunteer with the athletic department. While on campus they made a point of coming to the library to tell me how much the book study impacted their children. A few parents went further and started helping me in the library with shelving books or helping with

library events. Parents even reached out to me on Twitter to tell me of the impact the book study was having on their child.

Members of the administration saw the impact of the program and began to express their recognition of the library as the asset it is. They also began to view me differently, as evidenced by asking me to help with campus activities in more of a leadership role than in the past. I was also encouraged to work not just with the athletic department but also with school clubs to help all students find a role in our campus community. The positive comments from administrators were very uplifting. It always affirms the work that you are doing in the library when administrators spontaneously

comment on the positive impact that you are making.

I highly recommend all secondary-school librarians reach out to their coaching staff to talk about the possibility of collaborating to start a book club. Our experience was that many positive relationships were formed among the library staff, coaches, and students—relationships that might not have been formed without this program. "The community that a book club provides affirms our reading choices and encourages us to keep asking important questions about the book" (Rumohr-Voskuil and Van Duinen 2015). With Librarian in the Huddle, you are able to create a book club with a population that is often not found in the library. Be the librarian in the huddle!



Jessica Fitzpatrick is a high school librarian in Houston and is in her tenth year of as an educator. She holds a Bachelor of

Science degree in education from the University of Houston and a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of North Texas. She is an AASL member, 2022 Library Journal Mover and Shaker, 2022 Texas Library Association (TLA) Media Virtual Presence award winner, 2022 AASL Inspire Special Event Grant recipient, 2022 YALSA's MAE Award for Best Literature Program for Teens recipient, the 2022 TLA Branding Iron Award Winner for Reading Program, the 2020 TLA Branding Iron Award Winner for Community Engagement, a YALS article contributor, and on the TAYSHAS Reading Committee. She enjoys running, reading, and spending time with her two daughters and husband. You can follow her on Instagram @librarian_fitz and on Twitter @librarianfitz.

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Recommended Reading

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Intention in Your Makerspace: Making Your Maker Learning Space Accessible

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Many makerspace definitions are available in the field of library science—even more if you look in the fields of engineering, architecture, and design. My personal favorite definition of a makerspace comes from Laura Fleming (2016) who defines a makerspace as “a metaphor for a unique learning environment that encourages tinkering, play, and open-ended exploration for all.” The most important two words in this definition being “for all.” Nothing in this definition mentions a particular type of technology like a 3-D printer or laser cutter. Nothing in the definition points out a particular space or location. A makerspace is meant to be a place for exploring, experimenting, and thinking. It’s also a spot for exploration and experimentation in learning where everyone should be welcome and know that they have access.

Most makerspaces are not designed with accessibility in mind. School librarians rarely get to build their library or makerspace from the ground up. Schools can be created to be accessible, but libraries have shelves, tables, doorways, and so many more factors not always geared toward those students with special needs or designed with them in mind. Older libraries can have heavy furniture and tall shelves, items that are decades old and not accessible nor adaptable. Maneuvering within these

spaces and around the obstacles they contain can be difficult, and when a school librarian wants to implement a makerspace their library’s layout and furnishings can add another level of challenge (Anderson and Phillips 2022).

Our Research

My coauthor Ana Dubnjakovic and I wanted to look at accessibility in school library makerspaces (Moorefield-Lang and Dubnjakovic 2020). The data collection for this study took place right before the Covid-19 pandemic, and the writing of the full research piece occurred during the pandemic. Early in the decision-making process, we decided to focus on the motivation behind creating and operating makerspaces in school library settings. When running school library makerspaces, school librarians need drive and considerable time and financial investment to keep them going. We wanted to find out why school librarians are interested in doing so while also investing the extra work to make makerspaces accessible. For our full research piece, Icek Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) seemed like a logical theoretical perspective.

In our study, we used TPB to gauge how school librarians’ attitudes toward accessible makerspaces, their thoughts about the attitudes of others (such as administrators or

parents), and their own perceived control over the project/space affected their motivation to create accessible makerspaces. Ana and I found that all those listed items are important motivators. It was a little surprising that control over the project/space was by far the most important predictor that accounted for accessibility planning in a makerspace. Having control over the library and makerspace was the biggest predictor for successfully making the school library maker area accessible for the community.

We also found it interesting that the thoughts of others had a negative impact on motivation. In other words, considering what administrators or parents might think about the accessibility of the makerspace had a negative impact on librarians’ drive to invest energy into these projects. This finding is not too surprising when we look at recent situations with book banning, intellectual freedom issues, and, in some cases, lack of administrative/parent support.

Ana and I were also very interested in how school librarians made their maker learning spaces accessible. We are aware that accessibility might not be attainable to all learners in all spaces, and we wanted to know what kinds of accessible activities took place in those spaces. After all, school librarians are amazing, and it is possible some were able to modify spaces and introduce accessible

activities even if the makerspace was not yet fully accessible.

To create an inclusive environment for the students, school librarians used a wide range of low-tech tools and ideas, such as building blocks and board games, as well as high-tech tools like green screens, coding exercises, 3-D printing, and engineering competitions. For further accessibility, librarians altered signage in their makerspaces, labeling on their supplies, and language in maker directions. Librarians sought out adaptable furniture, opened space up for easy navigation, and made their library and maker areas easier to traverse.

Control over the makerspace was extremely important in the drive toward accessibility. That finding made Ana and me wonder what would make school librarians feel more empowered? If negative opinions or influences from parents or administrators existed, what would be good methods for countering those perspectives? Should conversations about makerspaces and accessibility happen in a more-structured way? Should they happen earlier in the planning or implementation of a maker learning space? Should an effort to outline responsibilities and expectations be made? Currently, for us, these are questions that remain unanswered. We hope to pursue them further in future research. We hope that more researchers will join us and provide some of their own answers, too.

Implications for Practice

You may have a school that already has a makerspace. You may be moving into a new school and planning to start a maker program. Regardless of where you might be in this maker journey, the following is a list of ideas to use in your makerspace wherever it may be.

- Have you considered online maker options available to students and other patrons from the comfort of their homes if Internet access is available? Options could include creation tools in music, video, storytelling, presentation, visual art, and so much more.
 - Are all areas of your library/ makerspace available and accessible to your students and other patrons?
 - Is your furniture adaptable (as described by Anderson and Phillips 2022)?
 - Do you have signage and instructions available in a variety of formats? If not, some ideas might be video instructions, Braille signage, images beside the names of your supplies, verbiage in a variety of languages.
 - Is your makerspace walker- and wheelchair-friendly? You might not have full control of the layout of your entire library but look
- at where items are placed on shelves, if tables come in a variety of heights, and if plugs are easy to access for technology.
- Are aisles wide and clear of obstruction? You may have only so much control of your space if shelves are tall or if tables are heavy, but do what you can to make the area accessible for all.
 - Can light and sound triggers be reduced or eliminated for those on the spectrum?
 - Is it possible to have open or unlimited makerspace time for your patrons, so making is less stressful and anxiety is minimized (Anderson and Phillips 2022)?

These are just a few ideas to ponder as you create or modify a makerspace. Share your accessibility successes and challenges with your peers. Get feedback from your librarian and educator networks about what works well in their libraries, classrooms, and maker learning areas. How will you move forward intentionally and offer a maker learning space that addresses the needs of all your learners and other stakeholders?



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(she/her/hers) is an associate professor in the Library and Information

Science Department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has long been interested in how technologies can enhance instruction in libraries and classrooms. Her current research focuses on makerspaces in libraries of all types. She had the honor of being nominated for the White House Champion of Change for Making in 2016 and was named by AASL as a Social Media Superstar in Tech Troubadour in 2018. To learn more about Heather and her work, check out her YouTube Channel Tech 15, or follow her on Twitter @actinginthelib.

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If we don't talk to children about how to think and feel about racial differences, they will come to their own conclusions—often inaccurately and in ways that may perpetuate discrimination or internalized racism.

Writing as Activism

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“Neutrality means accepting the way things are now.” ~ Howard Zinn (1991)

Each new day finds us living in an ever-polarized world where everything feels politicized, requiring people to take a side. While issues are generally not binary, remaining neutral is ultimately a type of action in the end, especially in the context of important issues like racism and book bans. As a pediatric psychologist and as a marriage and family therapist, we are expected to remain neutral with our patients and to not express our personal opinions. However, we are also trained to understand the detrimental impact of neutrality in relation to topics like trauma and discrimination.

The scientific literature has shown that by six months of age, infants can notice differences in skin color and hair texture. By two, children will point out differences in skin

color. By three, children may be forming judgments about people based on racial differences. And by five, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults hold (Belli 2020). Furthermore, we know that adults play a critical role in shaping children's understanding of race, whether the messages parents send are explicit or merely modeled by them.

In her 2017 TEDx Talk, Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum describes how her three-year-old came home from his day care center and asked if his skin is brown because he drank too much chocolate milk—another child in class had told him this. She told him that his skin is brown because he has something called melanin and that, while everyone has some, he is the student in his classroom with the most. At the same time, she worried about the child who made the statement about chocolate milk and what his understanding of race was. If we don't talk to children about

how to think and feel about racial differences, they will come to their own conclusions—often inaccurately and in ways that may perpetuate discrimination or internalized racism.

For us in particular, the topic of race and racism is one that has influenced our work greatly. We have witnessed firsthand the impact of discrimination on young patients and how it affects the way they perceive both themselves and their world. Moreover, we were shaped at a young age as Middle Eastern Americans who experienced discrimination in a post-9/11 world when hate crimes toward the Middle Eastern community in the U.S. grew exponentially.

During the Black Lives Matter protests that followed the murder of George Floyd, we felt an urgency to help children who may be in need of guidance and support in dealing with race and racism. We wanted to meet

the opportunity by using our skills and experiences to give children a resource to cope and even thrive in a society that is not yet free of discrimination. We understood that many children may not be exposed to much about racism beyond perhaps hearing about values related to treating everyone equally no matter how they look. Additionally, we knew that parents often avoid conversations on the topic due to discomfort, whether based on their personal experiences of racism or because they want to take a neutral stance or a colorblind approach. However, research has shown that avoiding the topic or taking a colorblind approach can instill a negative or taboo view of race (Williams 2011), and is a missed opportunity to promote positive and prosocial values. Taking a colorblind approach also means choosing not to see race and choosing to believe that everyone is treated equally, but this is inaccurate and unrealistic.

We wondered and worried about the experiences of children and families. How were children from communities of color understanding what was happening? How were parents and caregivers talking to them about racial trauma? What were ways parents and caregivers could build their child's resilience after a traumatic experience like discrimination? We found writing to

We are certainly living in extraordinary times, and we must consider whether being neutral is truly in the best interest of those we chose to nurture, protect, or heal.



be our form of activism and our way of answering these questions, while educating people about anti-racism and building pride and resilience in young children of color everywhere.

We wrote *The Proudest Color* (Familius 2021) to help parents, caregivers, and educators immerse children in learning how to counteract negative and harmful messages of discrimination. Our perspective is rooted in the evidence-based practices of racial socialization. Therefore, when the main character of our book, Zahra, experiences discrimination at school, her parents remind her of all the incredible people who share her skin tone and have done incredible things in the world. Research has shown that when adults instill cultural and racial pride in children it can serve as an effective buffer against the impact of discrimination (Hughes and Chen 1997). The goal of *The Proudest Color* is to be an engaging, gentle, and creative way of teaching children about race, racism, and emotion identification. Our hope for our book was that parents and educators would use it as a jumping off point for having enriching and supportive conversations with children.

Children's books have always been powerful and reliable tools for engaging children about such critical topics. To young ones, these

books are magical and are often very formative. The books we read in the library growing up have shaped us, fueled our passion for books, and led us to become authors. However, we are dismayed that what books are stocked on library shelves has become the center of a controversial movement. In the wake of Black Lives Matter demonstrations, in recent years schools, educators, and children's books have become focal points for those seeking to ignore and erase the problems of our country through book bans and oppressive legislation that aims to restrict educators, even threatening legal consequences. Recently the *Washington Post* described the book banning movement as "unprecedented" (Natanson 2022). A word that had been primarily used to describe the pandemic for the last several years of reporting was now being used to describe book banning! We are certainly living in extraordinary times, and we must consider whether being neutral is truly in the best interest of those we chose to nurture, protect, or heal.

As clinicians we are empathetic to the struggle in which librarians find themselves engaged, and we can understand how daunting it must be to have to make decisions that could upset library stakeholders. But, we believe that in times of uncertainty, reflecting on one's original motivation for entering a profession can be helpful. Librarians serve as

curators of content and knowledge for little minds, and the work they do resonates for generations. Providing a space for learning for even one child who feels that their skin tone is somehow wrong or bad is a worthwhile cause, despite any immediate blowback. School librarians have a unique opportunity to help shape and support future generations with books written about the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." ~James Baldwin (1962)

Dr. Sheila Modir and Jeff Kashou, *Middle Eastern Americans (Iranian and Palestinian) and clinicians, advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and work toward building resilience in children.* Sheila is a pediatric psychologist at a children's hospital. She earned a combined doctoral degree in Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and her Master's degree in social welfare at UCLA. Jeff is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, and a manager of clinical product and service design for a mental health tech company. His Master's degree from Pepperdine University is in clinical psychology. He has previously served on the Board of Directors for the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. They coauthored *The Proudest Color* and are donating their proceeds to the ACLU and other nonprofit organizations that promote racial justice. Together they have advocated at the state and federal level for better mental health care policies, in addition to doing international work with the Red Cross to support refugee asylum seekers in Belgium. They also consult on film and television productions, including those of Disney and Freeform, to ensure that mental health is portrayed responsibly. Find teaching resources based on *The Proudest Color* at <<https://theproudestcolor.com/resources>>.

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