

KNOWLEDGE QUEST



EVERYDAY BRAVERY

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American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association

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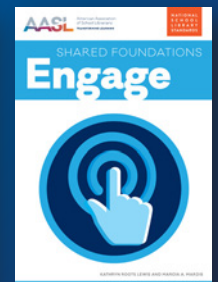
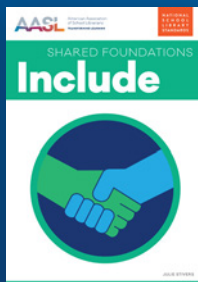
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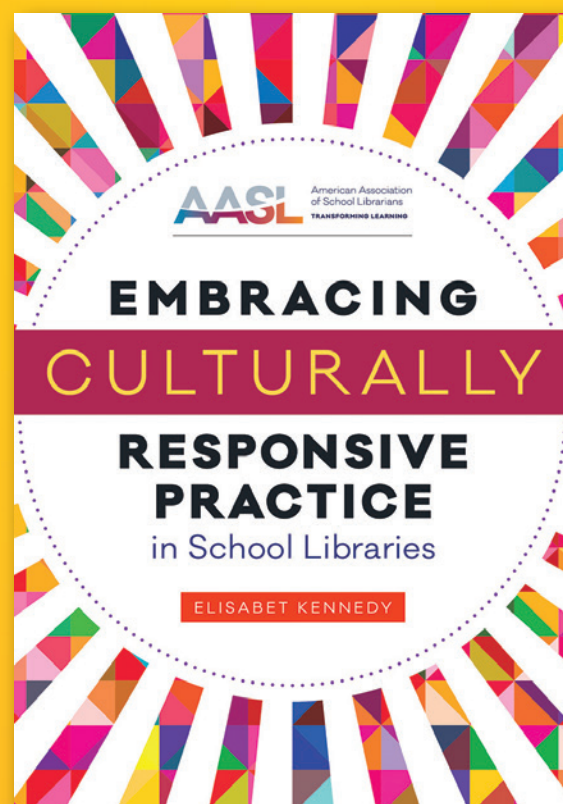
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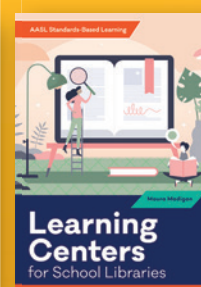
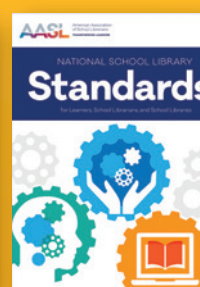
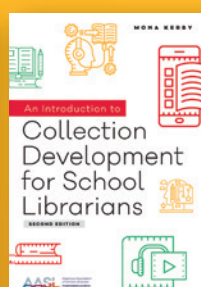
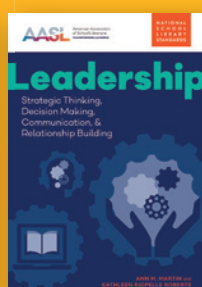
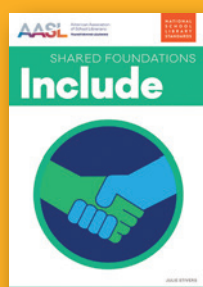


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We are seeing civic engagement from students on the issue of protecting school libraries on such a large scale because the school library enables the bravery necessary for that civic engagement.

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KQ

DISCUSS THIS ISSUE OF
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As school librarians, our work to support the core values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and intellectual freedom are currently intertwined.

Bravely Supporting AASL Core Values

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

I believe that the AASL core values of learning; innovation; equity, diversity, inclusion; intellectual freedom; and collaboration (AASL 2019) have always required a certain amount of bravery from school librarians. Of course, over the past several years, as school librarians have translated their services to respond to the pandemic and have faced an unprecedented number of book challenges, the need for bravery and courage has been heightened. Most recently, stories of courageous school librarians and community members defending the right to read have been highlighted. School librarians across the nation are bravely working to uphold our core professional values and to provide students with equity of access, experience, and opportunity within their libraries.

As school librarians, our work to support the core values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and intellectual freedom are currently intertwined. The American Library Association reported in September 2022 that the total number of book challenges were on track to exceed the number of book challenges in 2021, which was a record number (ALA 2022). PEN America reported that the vast majority of these book challenges featured “LGBTQ+ characters or characters of color, and/or cover race and racism in American history, LGBTQ+ identities, or sex education” (Friedman and Johnson 2022). Thus, the efforts by local, state, and national groups to ban books are having a harmful impact on groups of students from historically marginalized backgrounds.

School librarians across the nation are bravely working to uphold our core professional values and to provide students with equity of access, experience, and opportunity within their libraries.

The Unite Against Book Bans 2022 white paper “Empowered by Reading” (2022) provides reasons and support for why it is important to provide a wide range of reading material to *all* learners. Reasons to provide diverse materials included in the white paper are promoting student achievement and wellbeing, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering community cohesion. Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop’s essay from 1990 about our students’ need for “Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors” in children’s literature is included as a reference in the white paper and continues to be a foundational work to advocate for our learners’ access.

The efforts of school librarians to diversify their collections, I believe, has increased since the organization We Need Diverse Books was founded in 2014 and began highlighting the inequities in

children's publishing and our students' need for diverse books (We Need Diverse Books 2023). Since then, many articles, webinars, and resources have supported school librarians in their efforts to diversify their collections.

Of course, school librarians' work toward equity goes beyond just providing diverse books. In the AASL *National School Library Standards for Learners, Librarians, and Libraries* the core values of equity, diversity, and inclusion are intertwined in all of the Shared Foundations. The 2018 *Knowledge Quest* article "Speaking Up for Equity Takes Courage—But the Standards Have Your Back" by Kate Lechtenberg and Jeanie Phillips provides examples and action steps for equity efforts across all six Shared Foundations.

The strides that have been made toward equity through our library services and resources are now facing pushback by a variety of groups that are leading the censorship attempts. Many recent censorship attempts have included personal attacks on school librarians, other educators, and even students. In addition, adverse legislation has passed in several states and is proposed in many others. For many, it is a very scary environment with threats of fines, job loss, or jail time. While some school librarians in these situations have the environment and/or backing to fight back and be publicly "brave," others do not. I would advocate that we all prioritize safety and self-care as we work to support our students' freedom to read.

So, what can we do? I think the answer to the question will be a personal decision, but we can look to our core value of collaboration for some answers. If you are faced with challenges or attacks, remember that you are not alone. Reach out to others to speak for you when you cannot speak for yourself or to just support you by talking things through. Think about possible allies. A few ideas include:

- your local school, public, and academic library colleagues,
- teacher colleagues,
- local supportive parents or groups of parents already supporting other education issues,
- student groups,
- local LGBTQ+ organizations such as chapters of PFLAG or GLSEN,
- local independent book stores,
- your state school library association, and
- AASL and ALA.

*There are many levels of showing
courage in support of our students'
access to a wide range of materials,
and demonstrating this courage may
look different for each school librarian,
depending on their local situation.*

If you are in an area not facing censorship, please support your colleagues who are by speaking up for them or providing them emotional support. Reach out to them and ask them what they may need.

There are many levels of showing courage in support of our students' access to a wide range of materials, and demonstrating this courage may look different for each school librarian, depending on their local situation. For some, an act of bravery may be to speak out publicly against censorship. For others, it may mean speaking to the school board about the positive things going on in your library. For some it may mean speaking with your administrator to elicit support. For others, it may mean asking district leaders to follow the current reconsideration policy or serving on a reconsideration committee. For yet others, it may mean reaching out to a potential ally. And for others, it may mean making a purchase for the school library that will support students in spite of the possibility of facing pushback.

We must all (within legal limits) resist soft censorship. Examples of soft censorship include allowing our personal biases to affect the titles we purchase or to *not* purchase titles that would serve our learners because we are nervous about pushback. Soft censoring can also include silently weeding titles or limiting access to titles by putting them in a special section (behind the desk) or requiring special permission for check out. Another form of soft censorship is not including books in displays or lists made available to students. Soft censorship is difficult to track—but can have a long-lasting negative effect on our collections and our learners. *School Library Journal* published the results of a survey that showed that when asked the question "How often do you find yourself weighing the effect of

controversial subject matter when making book purchase decisions?” 7 percent of respondents said always, 25 percent said often, and 50 percent said sometimes (Yorio 2022). This total of 82 percent may indicate that the current environment is effecting school library purchasing decisions even in areas without adverse laws. While making purchasing decisions, it is crucial to think about *all* of your students and how best to support them with the needed “windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors.”

When I joined the school library profession more than twenty years ago, I would have never imagined the situation that we find ourselves in today with a record-breaking number of challenges, and school librarians facing personal attacks and threats for doing their jobs. I do have hope, however, that we will get through this. I am proud to be a member of the school library profession, and I am always impressed and inspired by the work of my school library colleagues nationwide. We must continue to bravely work together and stand together to support each other and our learners’ right to read.

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). 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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Empowered by Reading

The Benefits of Giving Youth Access to a Wide Variety of Reading Materials

There are many important benefits of providing children and youth with a wide variety of developmentally appropriate reading materials – books which reflect their personal life experiences, as well as the experiences, stories, and histories of others in and beyond their communities. Reading books that represent a range of perspectives promotes student achievement, enhances youth wellbeing, and contributes to community cohesion. Trusted adults, including teachers, school librarians, and public librarians work to provide access to high-quality reading materials and teach youth to read them critically.

Promoting student achievement and wellbeing

Encouraging students to read is profoundly important. Reading skills

“When we provide students with texts that tug at their hearts, open their minds, or touch their souls, **we are fueling interest, which fuels engagement, which fuels learning.**” — Jenny Eisenman¹

affect all other aspects of learning in school, as well as future opportunities in career and life. Research has demonstrated that access to books can outweigh the academic

disadvantages of poverty. Youth read more when they can choose what they read and find what they are reading to be interesting and relevant to their lives. When they read more,

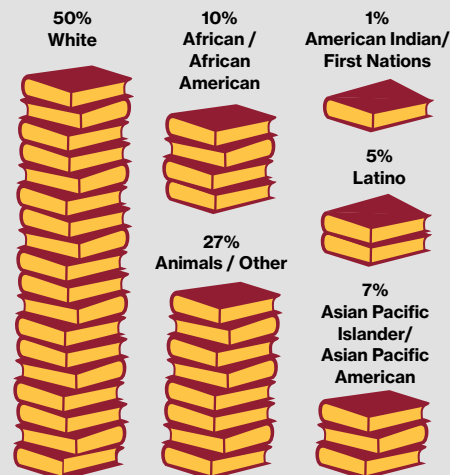
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ Providing children and youth with access to a wide variety of reading materials in which they can both see themselves and experience the lives of others benefits the individual reader as well as the community.
- ▶ Books that engage readers with relevant and authentic stories encourage deeper and more prolific reading which, in turn, improve students' academic achievement, wellbeing, and future opportunities.
- ▶ Books on controversial and challenging topics create bridges for difficult conversations with parents and other trusted adults and help youth critically navigate their world.

REPRESENTATION OF YOUTH IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A 2018 study from the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin–Madison found just 1% of children's books depicted American Indian/First Nations characters, 5% portrayed Latino characters, 7% Asian Pacific Islander/Asian Pacific American, 10% African/African American, 27% Animals/Other, while 50% depicted White characters.²

Elementary and secondary school students in the United States have a wide variety of backgrounds. **Educators and librarians strive to provide readers with materials that authentically reflect those backgrounds and the larger world in which they and their peers live.**³



“Growing up, I was the only mixed person in my school. I wasn’t allowed to play princesses because there wasn’t a dark princess. When I moved and went to a more diverse high school I was still alone because of my sexual orientation. **Books allowed me to find people who are and were like me and in that never feel alone.**” — DeAnna S.⁴

“**Parents also agree reading is a way to help their child understand different points of view and help their children find their place in the world.** And, just as many adults turn to books to help us through difficult times, many parents have also seen how the right story can support their child through life’s challenges – a finding that children themselves agree to be true.”

— Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report⁵

their reading abilities improve, fueling a virtuous circle.⁶

Giving children and youth access to books that they can personally relate to encourages reading, improving reading outcomes and student wellbeing. One bilingual teacher described how her Spanish-speaking second graders became much more engaged in reading

when she substituted standard elementary texts with books that reflected the social and cultural experiences of her students.⁷ Similar results were found when African American students in grades two to eight read culturally relevant books whose characters, places, and events reflected their own experiences. Reading engagement

deepened, and comprehension scores improved.⁸

Encouraging critical thinking and family connection

Books that reflect the complexity of our society and thoughtfully address difficult and controversial issues can be valuable tools in helping young people explore the struggles of others and the consequences of decisions.

In one study, teachers provided eighth grade students with collections of young adult literature that had positive reviews, many containing “disturbing” but also personally relevant topics. As a result, students read more, and students and caregivers reported improvements in student achievement, personal growth, development of empathy, as well as improved caregiver/teen relationships. Among other things, the books presented youth and their families with opportunities to talk about challenging topics. As one parent said, “The books give us an excuse, permission to discuss things with [our child] that might be harder to talk about otherwise.” The books

SAFER SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Students who attend schools with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and materials report feeling safer and experiencing less harassment than their peers in schools without inclusive curriculum and materials.



Only

19.6%

of LGBTQ students report the inclusion of LGBTQ-related topics in textbooks or assigned reading.

Only

48.9%

of LGBTQ students report that they could find books or information on LGBTQ-related topics in their school library.⁹

“As our nation continues to diversify, it is essential that children learn to understand the important role of their culture and the cultures of other people in creating an overall global culture respectful of differences.”

— Jamie Campbell Naidoo¹⁰

also helped students grapple with the experiences of close family members on topics like the difficulties posed by teen pregnancy or having a sibling with a disability.”

Fostering community cohesion

Giving youth access to a wide variety of reading materials has significant value at the community level as well. Reading books that feature people or situations that young people have little direct experience of in their own lives can help foster empathy, tolerance, and connection. Literature can act as a window, enabling readers to put themselves in the shoes of people living lives different

from their own.¹² Peering through the window of literature allows readers to consider the complexities, nuances, and difficulties of a variety of situations. This includes learning about different cultures, traditions, religions, and family situations. For example, a read-aloud of a book with a child protagonist who has a parent who is incarcerated, encouraged fifth grade students to reflect on the impact of incarceration on families and helped students who had experienced this personally to feel more comfortable talking about it.¹³

Similarly, when kindergarten-age Korean American children read a variety of picture books dealing with racial equality, discrimination,

freedom, and racial diversity, their attitudes changed over time. Among other things, the children’s previously negative attitudes were visibly reduced, and they were more open to making diverse friends.¹⁴ Those benefits extend to older students. Research shows that when schools offer an inclusive curriculum, including relevant reading materials, LGBTQ+ students feel safer and encounter less bullying. They also report better mental health and academic outcomes.¹⁵

Access to books – including and, perhaps, especially those that raise difficult questions – is integral to healthy development for young people and our communities. When we ban or

“When we censor, we discourage open discussion instead of building our children’s capacity to think for themselves.”

— Jerie Blinnt¹⁶

READING WITH A CRITICAL EYE

Teachers and librarians help students learn how to read and critically reflect on challenging books. Rather than shielding youth from literature on controversial topics, we should help students learn to navigate these narratives. This gives young people an opportunity to reflect on moral questions, changes in social norms, differing points of view, and the impact of historical events on the present.



restrict access to books, we deprive young people of the opportunity to see themselves reflected in stories, to fully engage in their learning, and to grapple with the complexity of the real world in which they live and must learn to navigate. In our pluralistic and democratic society, every book has its reader, and professional educators and librarians connect youth with those books that nurture literacy, critical thinking, and other skills and dispositions necessary for future success.

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YOUTH WANT ACCESS TO BOOKS

Recent years have seen rising numbers of demands to ban or restrict youth access to books in schools and libraries. This is nothing new — through history, access to many books that are now considered classics, such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Brave New World*, and *Beloved* have been restricted. Yet, young people themselves are often the starkest defenders of access to information. **In 2021 only 1% of challenges to books were brought by students.**¹⁷



ABOUT UNITE AGAINST BOOK BANS

Unite Against Book Bans, an initiative of the American Library Association, is a broad coalition of organizations and individuals that believe:

- Reading is a foundational skill, critical to future learning and to exercising our democratic freedoms.
- Books are tools for understanding complex issues. Limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues.
- Individuals should be trusted to make their own decisions about what to read.
- Parents should not be making decisions for other parents' children.
- Young people deserve to see themselves reflected in a library's books.

Learn more at UniteAgainstBookBans.org.



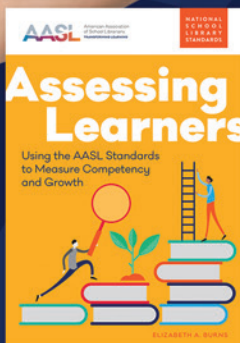
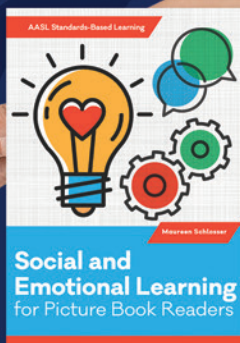
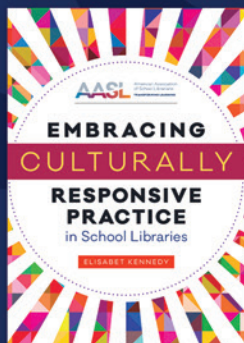
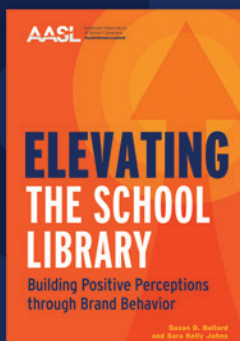
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Being a reader my whole life and allowed by both of my parents to choose what I wanted to read, I have a foundational belief that children and young adults have a right to choose what they read.

Everyday Bravery

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

It is easy to recognize bravery in first responders who rush toward a burning fire or rising flood waters to rescue people. However, we often miss the everyday bravery of the people around us. Yet, the bravery we observe every day tends to have a more profound impact on us. Throughout this issue you will see similar definitions for bravery: courage is the willingness to confront adversity, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.

My mother, a great influence in my life, modeled this kind of bravery every day. A victim of polio as a child, she had to learn to walk again with the added impediment of one leg being a bit longer than the other and each foot a different size. All her life she struggled with her balance and the challenge of shoe shopping. She never let that get in her way of doing what she wanted to do. Mom played basketball in high school, learned to play the organ (which had lots of foot pedals), and loved to dance. Bravery confronted adversity.

Born in the fifties, I grew up in Little Rock. Too young to understand integration and what was happening at Little Rock Central High School, I did notice that my mother started having tea parties. The purpose of the tea parties was to develop personal relationships and strategize ways to end segregation. These tea parties were my first encounters with African American women and children. I didn't pay a lot of attention to the conversations among the women, but I enjoyed playing with the children and eating the cookies. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I realized the courage it must have taken for my mother to

invite African Americans into my very white middle-class neighborhood, and for those women to come to our house. Bravery confronted intimidation and bigotry.

After I left home for college, my mother decided to go back to school to get her Master's degree in music. To earn extra money, my mother accompanied other music majors on the piano. This led to a gig accompanying some participants in the Miss Gay Arkansas pageant, and she continued to play the piano for their talent portion of the pageant for several years as well as acting as a voice coach for contestants. These activities led to an increased circle of gay friends who could often be found at our house visiting their honorary mother. This was the seventies, and a middle-aged woman having gay friends was not exactly looked upon with great favor. Again, bravery confronted intimidation and bigotry.

My mother's example of everyday bravery helped me get through a multiple-book challenge at the high school a number of years ago where I was one of the two librarians. This challenge was very public and resulted in negative letters to the editor and columns in the local paper as well as ugly phone calls. The prosecuting attorney was approached with a request to have us arrested as purveyors of pornography. It was very difficult to show up every day in the library when facing so much negativity. Sound familiar?

Being a reader my whole life and allowed by both of my parents to choose what I wanted to read, I have a foundational belief that children and young adults have

Today's political climate is fraught with dangers for school librarians: legislating what we can't teach, what we can't have in library collections, and criminalizing school librarians. It takes bravery to fight against the efforts to limit the resources and learning opportunities that our students can access through the school library.

a right to choose what they read. As a school librarian, it was my responsibility in collection development to balance what was appropriate for my students and what they wanted or needed to read. In this issue Lia Fisher-Janosz discusses in her article finding courage in curation as well as providing a safe, nonjudgmental space in the school library. The school library, being the heart of the school, is where kindness and caring can be modeled and encouraged.

Providing a safe school library to give students the opportunity to be brave as they explore new ideas and experiences is the subject of Ashley Hawkins's article. Students need support as they struggle with their gender or sexual identity, being bullied, or just figuring out how they fit in their world. Ashley shares examples of her students finding the bravery to be themselves, to take leadership roles, and to protect their community through civic engagement.

Although Julie Stivers makes no claim to being a brave person, her article discusses the importance of being present for our students, and creating an inclusive library. While I have always felt that student voice is important and should be honored, Julie has taken it a step further. In her article, she describes a student-led professional development for school librarians that she created with three of her students. This professional development focuses on a framework for building inclusive libraries. Julie may not view herself as being brave, but being *here* for our students sometimes requires taking a risk, and that is brave.

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that our students can access through the school library. Arlene Laverde walks us through her journey to testify in front of the New York State Assembly's Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. Her advocacy for effective school libraries that are led by certified school librarians as being crucial to equity and inclusion is an inspiring example of bravery.

My mother did not necessarily consider herself a brave person, but she did try to live her life with kindness and acceptance towards all. Just as my mother influenced me with her everyday bravery, the authors in this issue can inspire us with examples of their own and their students' everyday bravery. In preparing for this column, I spent some time looking for quotes about bravery. This one by Jasmine Guy, an American actress (Whitley Gilbert-Wayne in *A Different World*, a spinoff from *The Cosby Show*) best encapsulates the theme of this issue: "I believe people who practice their beliefs in daily life are activists." I would add that they are also brave.

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FEATURE



THE EVERYDAY OF STUDENTS

Ashley Hawkins

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BRAVERY IN THE LIBRARY

“Wait, is that *alive*?” a student asks me, peering into the large tank on my circulation desk. Our library bearded dragon, Kuro, peers back at her lazily as he lounges on his basking rock.

“Of course! Would you like to meet him?” I ask, quickly going around the desk. As I swing the tank open and pick up Kuro, the student eyes me nervously.

“Does he bite?”

“Only if you’re a butternut squash. Here, you can touch him. Just run your finger gently along his back.”

The student cautiously strokes Kuro and relaxes. “He’s softer than I thought he’d be! It actually feels nice...”

“Would you like to hold him?”

She stiffens, her eyes going back and forth between Kuro and myself. Finally, a spark of resolve hardens in her eyes, and she nods enthusiastically.

I ease Kuro into her hands, instructing her to support his belly. Kuro sits patiently in her hands as she adjusts to holding him. When he touches her hand with his tongue, she proclaims, “He likes me!”

Such moments of everyday bravery from my students are the true sustenance of my job as a school librarian. Those who do not work within our spaces may not know how much we see, but the reality is that so much of what happens in the school library takes courage from our students. A certain level of bravery is required to explore new ideas and experiences, affirm one’s identity, seek out a space of safety and community, and, as we’ve seen recently, protect the space where experiences and ideas are central.

The Bravery to Explore

“Explore” is one of the AASL Standards Shared Foundations for a good reason: it is integral to our work in the library. In my experience, students are often coming to the school library to explore new ideas

and concepts that they may not be able to explore in the traditional classroom because of curricular demands or time constraints.

And the library is always open to that exploration. We build our high-interest collections for this purpose. We ensure we have books that capitalize on our students’ curiosity and allow them to learn new things about themselves—to be brave and see where they can go.

Some students are learning new languages, including students who are new to the country and are trying to improve their English—or even teach themselves English. The experience of searching for a book in a language that is not your first is daunting, and it takes an incredible amount of bravery. When I stood in a bookstore in Tokyo a few years ago, suddenly realizing I didn’t know how books were actually organized, I understood what some of my students went through when they were thrust into my library. That pressing anxiety of having to go up to someone and asking how to find something,



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admitting you don't know how to perform a task that might be simple and second nature for the other person, is a daunting experience. Our students who speak English as a second language, who navigate our libraries and need them as a bridge to their new home, are some of our bravest patrons. They are conquering so much to gain knowledge.

Students engage in a collaborative coding lesson in the school library.

Then there are those who come to learn in less traditional ways in the library. I'm notorious for always saying "Yes!" to trying something new in the library if students make a case for it. This is how we've gotten a bearded dragon, a sewing club, a recording studio, coding workshops, a Dungeons & Dragons club, and a forthcoming e-sports team. Saying "Yes" comes from a wish to respect students' courage to explore.

Let's look at what it took to bring Kuro into our library. First, my library aides (all students) came to me and made a collective case that the library needed a pet. I didn't make it easy on them. I found the Pets in the Classroom Grant, but they needed to pick the pet, make a case for why that pet was the best for the library, and commit to taking care of that pet as part of their job. And they came through, even though it was extra work to do the research. They learned when Kuro was obtained that they would have to feed him live bugs. Coping with the bugs, it turned out, takes the most courage from my students. To see some of my supposedly tough Brooklyn boys squirm as they drop wiggling roaches in front of Kuro is a delight—though I try hard not to show it.

But having a pet also gives the students a moment to show a different kind of bravery: feeling vulnerable but doing something anyway. Some of our students with

They read in the school library about the things they cannot talk to their parents about. I have received small sticky notes, with small notes written on them, tiny so no one but me can read: "Where are the books about girls who love other girls?" "Anxiety books?" "Can I talk to you?"



the most struggles, but who never show weakness, are the ones who come to hold Kuro. They stroke him gently and let him sit on their shoulders. They're able to explore a softer side of themselves.

The Bravery to Be Yourself

In New York City, the Department of Education has an initiative called "Respect for All." As the mentor for the LGBTQ+ Positivity Club (the name our students chose for our GSA to centralize more identities), I am one of the "Respect for All" liaisons on our campus, alongside the guidance counselors. This means students come to me when they are struggling with their gender or sexual identity or if they are being targeted or excluded in any way because of it. I have been in this position for years, but this year has been the time students need the most support.

My campus serves a primarily Afro-Caribbean population. This means my students who are queer are feeling a tremendous amount of societal pressure. Many of my students are closeted at home, and those who are open with their identity encounter prejudice from extremist groups not only for their gender and sexual identity, but also for being BIPOC

and new to the country. They are aware of what people say and are distressed by it. They receive hateful messages on TikTok and Instagram for all of their identity, and it's a horrible weight.

This is why it was an incredible gift when Lambda Literary provided students the opportunity to meet with Junauda Petrus, author of *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* (Dutton 2019) in a virtual visit. The students were engaged so vibrantly, asking questions and listening to her every word. When I talked to a student later, they told me, "I felt like she actually got us and listened to us. This is the best thing we ever did."

To be able to be oneself is a hard thing for anyone. Sometimes, students are nervous about picking up certain books. My desk has a cabinet where I store books for students who can't take their books home, even with a protective cover. They read in the library about the things they cannot talk to their parents about. I have received small sticky notes, with small notes written on them, tiny so no one but me can read: "Where are the books about girls who love other girls?" "Anxiety books?" "Can I talk to you?"



Then there are the books I find in odd spots, tucked hurriedly into the science section or behind books on Apartheid. Books on relationships, sexuality, abuse, dealing with being arrested—resources on topics that students are dealing with but are too nervous to check out. Sometimes, books disappear altogether, only to reappear in the library a month later or be found by a custodian in a stairwell.

All of this seeking of this important and sensitive information takes bravery, even if young people choose not to interface with me to acquire it. Most of the time, it's an admission to themselves that they need guidance.

The Bravery to Lead and Collaborate

“Can we do a taco night?” the president of the LGBTQ+ Positivity Club asked me as I was in the middle of checking out a stack of *Demon Slayer*: *Kimetsu no Yaiba* books to another student.

“Ahhhh,” I floundered, my mind racing. *We don’t have any money! Can I get*

We are seeing civic engagement from students on the issue of protecting school libraries on such a large scale because the school library enables the bravery necessary for that civic engagement. The fact that students are going to school board meetings, starting banned-book clubs, and initiating petitions and protests is a testament to the value of our space and the incredible capability of our young people.



money? Can I afford to pay out of pocket? No, definitely not; I'm broke! But I don't like to say no!

"We already all decided who's bringing what," she explained, obviously reading my panic.

"Oh!" I said, relaxing and handing the books over to the other student. "Well, of course! Community organizing and feeding each other is an important part of LGBTQ+ culture! What do you need me to bring?"

Since I've turned clubs over to full student control, these sorts of scenes play out regularly. We have an approval process, which is mostly just checking with me before doing something that will require resources or cleanup. Dungeons & Dragons sometimes needs dice replenishment or new character sheets. LGBTQ+ Positivity usually needs craft supplies. Occasionally they ask me to participate or mediate, but I don't run meetings or dictate activities. I've had to be brave to give up control, to trust that my students are the experts. And they've had to learn to take leadership and collaborate.

The DM, or dungeon master, is the leader of Dungeons & Dragons, and the current DM, Luis, is in charge of training potential successors. Luis has had to learn how to manage a group of people and has even told me that he now appreciates how hard it is to be a teacher. Anyone who has run a game of D&D can tell you that even adults can get unruly, and keeping your peers organized and in line can sometimes be frustrating.

It takes bravery to organize your peers, to take charge, and to build a community. It takes courage to work together and to make decisions on your own. Because the school library is a center of self-guided learning, it harnesses this brand of bravery. The school library is a proving

ground for leadership, collaboration, and finding oneself. Students demonstrate this every day in school libraries across the country.

The Bravery to Protect Your Community

As we've seen recently, students have become more and more vocal as attacks on school libraries have increased. These students who are speaking up are showing a bravery that is beyond the everyday, but it is also a bravery that we all know our students are more than capable of displaying. Students know that these attacks are an attack on more than just books. As "Ez from California" said in the *New York Times* article "What Students Are Saying about Banning Books from School Libraries":

If these books get taken down for inappropriate content, we need to find out the root reason why... Is it because these books talk about severe racism, sexuality, gender, and real-life harms? Why shouldn't people learn how to identify, treat others with respect, understand how to help/support your BIPOC community, support victims, and understand the horrors inflicted upon LGBTQIA BIPOC people? Learning or understanding these issues will better your society, the empathy people have for others and have a way to have self-empowerment and community." (Alexie and Hollister 2022)

We are seeing civic engagement from students on the issue of protecting school libraries on such a large scale because the school library enables the bravery necessary for that civic engagement. The fact that students are going to school board meetings, starting banned-book clubs, and initiating petitions and protests is a testament to the value of our space and the incredible capability of our

young people. They're organized and brave, oftentimes braver than most adults. They also have the most power as stakeholders in our space. As Jonathan Friedman says, "Teachers are afraid of losing their jobs... Principals only have so much that they can do in the face of school boards. But students can protest. Students can speak out" (Morris 2022).

Students see the school library as somewhere worth fighting for, and their bravery is the truly sustaining power in our space.



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Supporting
ARTICLE



Be Brave by Being Here

Julie Stivers

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Listen. I would never call myself brave. That I'm writing an article in a journal issue centered on school librarian bravery creates a debilitating swirl of embarrassment and imposter syndrome in my head. I can lay bare in one word what I try to be both for and with students: *here*. I'm not a particularly brave person—I'm conflict-averse and literally scared of the dark—but whether creating my next book order, speaking at a school board meeting, or laughing with students in our library space, I try to be *here*. *I am here*.

The official definition for *here* includes “at this place or position.” As school librarians, we are at both a unique place in time and position in our schools. Attacks are coming at our collections, programs, and spaces from right-wing groups that have been organized with specific talking points against our students' right to books and curriculum that reflect their lived experiences. We know this. So many incredible librarians, educators, and authors are doing gutsy work as the public face of the opposition to these coordinated attacks. Educators and youth librarians as a group are both facing an onslaught of intimidation. As school librarians, we fit in both of these groups (librarians and educators), and dealing with the current climate can feel

overwhelming. It *is* overwhelming. Luckily, our way forward is clear: simply being here for and with our students.

Being Here through the #LibFive

The students at my alternative, academic-recovery school come to us from their base schools and at our school are able to rewrite their own school stories. Some of that rewriting naturally happens in the library. Many of our students have experiences at multiple schools, but it is not until they come to our school that many of them become frequent library users for the first time. That is both powerful and humbling! To help us all build inclusive libraries where all students—especially our most vulnerable students—are both centered and cherished, the #LibFive was born. I don't use the term “vulnerable” lightly. The attacks on our students' right to read is not random—it is focused on our BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ students and families. Our BIPOC and Queer students are vulnerable due to both the undeniable history and reality of oppression and the current toxic climate in which our students are growing up.

The #LibFive is student-led professional development for

librarians that I was privileged to create with three amazing eighth-graders: Cesar Falcon, Jose Gomez, and Jaida Morris (see figure 1). Even though these students are now finishing high school, the #LibFive framework is just as timely a method for building inclusive libraries now as it was when they were middle-schoolers. It's the overarching way we can be *here* for our students every day.

The #LibFive: Five Key Foundations for Building Inclusive Libraries:

1. See me! Listen to me.
2. Show me on the shelves and walls. Read those books yourself.
3. Graphic novels and manga are not extra.
4. Show the joy in our stories.
5. Make the school library a sorting free zone.

These ideas might seem obvious or too simple, but I would implore those thinking along those lines to think again. The ideas are powerful due to their simplicity and, when done well, can result in empowering and inclusive school libraries. I never want my students to think that my interest in them rests on whether or not they identify as a reader, and love that the #LibFive



Figure 1. Jaida Morris, Cesar Falcon, Julie Stivers, and Jose Gomez making their #LibFive presentation for the first time.

is bookmarked by tenets that are bigger than reading, bigger than literacy. They point to recognizing the joy and power that are inherent in welcoming our students' true, full selves.

The work we did on the #LibFive was based on key scholarship, action-based research, and student wisdom. Our first step in preparation for building this library professional development was accessing research related to our topic. We began with Dr. Kafi Kumasi's work, which found that many students of color felt like outsiders in their school libraries and that it often seemed like a place that was "owned" by the librarian (Kumasi 2012). My students reported having negative experiences in past libraries that matched those in Dr. Kumasi's study. As a foundation for thinking about libraries and youth, I shared findings from the powerful Mary Stone Hanley and George W. Noblit study (2009), which found that for youth of color, positive racial identity leads to academic success. From there, we moved to unpacking the current state of representation in youth literature by exploring the

Diversity in Children's Books infographics.

Jaida, Jose, and Cesar then embarked on their own action-based research. They conducted library walks in our Mount Vernon Library. They thought about the libraries at their previous schools and their experiences there. We brainstormed about what makes a library feel truly welcoming—a place where they *belong*. We spoke to other students at our school about their library experiences. We initially came

up with eleven ideas for what libraries and librarians can do to be inclusive. We spent months on this, eventually shaping our list into our five biggest

ways that libraries can build inclusive programs and spaces. During the whole process, I always tried to de-center myself as the librarian and bring it back to the library and the library program, collection, and space.

See me! Listen to me.

See me! It seems so basic, but clearly, it's not. My current students, to this day, share stories about not feeling seen in other libraries, not being seen. Truly seeing students requires a lot: pushing back against colorblindness (which only hurts our students), affirming Queerness, being disability-positive and mental health-sensitive. This does not mean that we should embody any kind of savior role. For those of us who are white librarians, this truth is even more critical. As Jason Reynolds clearly tells us: Our students "don't need [us] to save them." They need us "to see them" (Krok 2018).

As Jose said, "Find out what we're interested in. We have things to say and in the classroom, there may not be time. Please let us tell you things!" Please. Let. Us. Tell. You. Things. Look, I know. As school librarians, we are busy. With teacher shortages, many librarians are being called to

[The #LibFive tenets] point to recognizing the joy and power that are inherent in welcoming our students' true, full selves.

cover classes, teach electives, and fill duty-coverage across the school—and this is all in addition to running the beautiful and welcoming small

company that is our library. Here's the thing, though. We have to drop our other tasks to let our students talk to us. Nothing we can do is more important.

Seeing our students is also supporting them. Supporting their whole selves and creating brave spaces where students feel secure enough to be themselves. Our libraries need to be this space! Our libraries should be this space. Now, more than ever.

Show me on the shelves and walls. Read those books yourself.

To have a collection where every student can easily find books that reflect them and their lived experiences requires intentionality. First, we know the dismal statistics of youth publishing. Yes, some elements may be improving, but publishers still have so far to go. This tenet requires us to be vigilant in getting the books—books that reflect our students, their lived experiences, and their interests—our students need and deserve.

Second, we're being intimidated through legal initiatives; racist, homophobic, and transphobic talking points; and news stories that adhere to a weak, both-sides dogma. Some states are passing—or seeking to pass—laws to criminalize educators who collect diverse, inclusive materials. As a profession, we're collectively worried about self-censorship in our libraries. First, let's be clear. When we are talking about self-censorship, we are not talking about responsible collection management decisions that we make on a near-daily basis. However, if I don't collect a title because I'm worried about pushback, even though multiple review sources identify the series as a good fit for my middle school students, that is self-censorship. And it's hurting our students.

Look, it's valid to think about outside pressures. I get it. I do. I've had horrible things said about me on Twitter. A local reporter likes to twist anything I say in defense of our students into a controversy. We can think about those outside pressures—but we *cannot* act on them.

The only pressures we *can* act on are: Honoring our students and their rights to true history, representation, and affirmation. That's it.

We don't have to be public about it. I recognize that I carry white, cis

privilege into spaces I inhabit, and if I can weaponize that privilege in defense of our students, I will. So, no, we don't all need to be public, but we do all need to be ruthless about it, quietly if necessary, to build a collection and space that affirms our students. After all, Jaida reminded, "I need to feel wanted, welcomed, and seen. That is NOT possible if I don't see myself in library displays and on the shelves."

Django Paris said, "Think of your syllabus as an act of resistance; something to be posted in the streets,

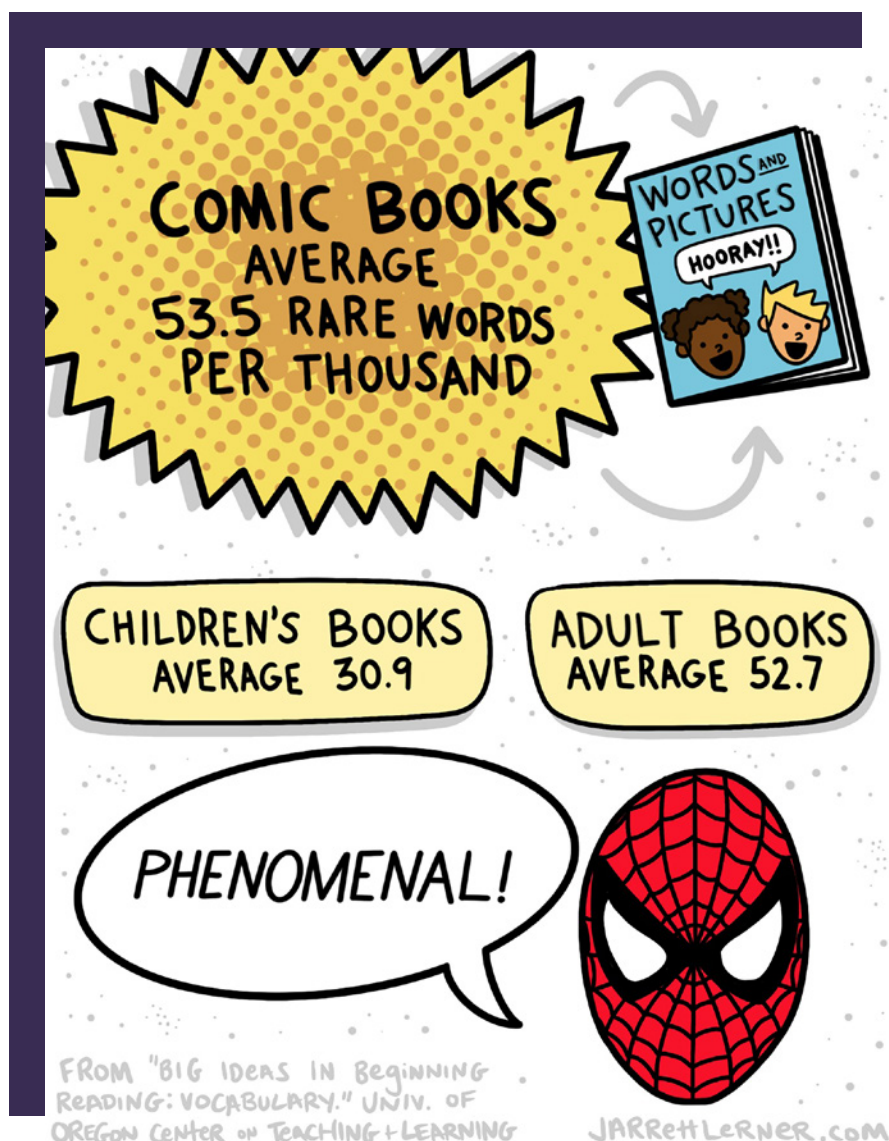


Figure 2. One of Jarrett Lerner's infographics librarians can use.

handed out at rallies” (Paris 2018). This is how we should think of our order lists! Our circulation/literacy lessons, our choices for class texts and literature circles, our displays. Are they resisting the vile things being said about our Queer students? Are they resisting the movement to block real narratives and erase both the history and current realities of our BIPOC students? Before I click to finalize any order, I think of this call, this quote. *Am I proud of my order? Is it a quiet but powerful rallying cry?*

Graphic novels and manga are not extra.

This was Cesar’s favorite foundation, and his loyalty to Dav Pilkey’s *Dog Man* was boundless, which I *joyfully* encouraged. There is no place in an inclusive library for any kind of shaming about reading material. Being an advocate for students means being an advocate for graphic novels in not only your library but throughout your school and in the curriculum. Knowing that graphic novels strengthen multiple literacies, teach decoding and comprehension strategies, and contain complex vocabulary are key realities to have at the ready when facing pushback in our schools. Proudly display the graphics created by Jarret Lerner (free to educators at <<https://jarrettlerner.com/art>>). Celebrate the format *and* your students. Figure 2 shows my favorite—and is one of my go-to hype pieces for using comics, graphic novels, and manga in the curriculum.

Every librarian in 2023 knows that manga is essential to feature in our libraries due to its popularity and the intense love and engagement it inspires in students. Beyond the increase in foot-traffic that manga will attract to your library, collecting manga is also an equity issue. When my students and I prepared a presentation for librarians on



#libfive

FIVE KEY FOUNDATIONS FOR BUILDING INCLUSIVE LIBRARIES

-  **1. See me. Listen to me.**
-  **2. Show me on the shelves and walls. Read those books yourself.**
-  **3. Graphic Novels + Manga are not extra.**
-  **4. Show the JOY in our stories.**
-  **5. Make the library a sorting-free zone.**

To read more, visit bit.ly/libfiveyalsablog and follow our story on Twitter at #libfive and @BespokeLib.

The #libfive was developed by Mount Vernon Middle School Students Cesar Falcon, Jose Gomez, Jaida Morris, and their librarian Julie Stivers.



the power of manga and anime, they highlighted the marginalized identities they inhabited. This is not to say that all marginalized communities love manga or anime—there is no monolith. However, based on my students’ lived experiences, testimony, and so many of our observations as librarians, there is a strong representation of BIPOC students, Queer students, and neurodivergent students amongst our manga and anime fans. That beautiful reason is why I consider collecting manga an equity issue. Graphic novels—including manga—are uniquely vulnerable to book challenges due to their visual brand

of storytelling. We can be here for our students by flooding our libraries with them!

Show the joy in our stories.

This foundation came to be after Jaida wrote down “Black People Look Good” when doing action-based research and recording what she saw in our Mount Vernon Library. It was the first takeaway on Jaida’s written list and happily lives in my head forever. When Jaida talks about this idea, she stresses that in our library, she did *not* see only books with Black characters featuring historical struggles but saw covers with Black

characters having adventures, living in the future, and as part of romantic stories. Jaida reminds us that when we “show the joy, happiness, and normal lives of youth of color in books, you are showing the joy and happiness of *me*.”

The phenomenal Nic Stone wrote a powerful piece in the summer of 2020 entitled “Don’t Just Read about Racism—Read Stories about Black People Living.” (If you haven’t read it yet, please go do so. It’s free to read online after a quick Google search and is more important than anything I have to say.) What Nic is saying and what Jaida is saying are beautifully tied together. It doesn’t take bravery to relentlessly show this joy and affirm our students, only us all stepping into our shared humanity.

Make the school library a sorting free zone.

When we think about making our libraries a sorting free zone, let’s consider a wide range of sorting that is a barrier to building a brave library. It’s not inclusive to sort our students by reading level. Or perceived behavior issues. Or (shudder) Lexile scores. There is no reason to sort by gender (or perceived gender). Remove saying “boys and girls” or “ladies and gentlemen” from your vocabulary—it’s easy! Collective nouns like “students,” “scholars,” “folks” (or “y’all,” “everyone,” “precious gems”) all work. It goes without saying that we honor our students’ and colleagues’ pronouns.

Students get sorted another way in our school libraries, which at their core should center equitable access to resources. However, there are events at school libraries where students literally have to buy themselves access—an event at their children’s schools that economically marginalized parents found to be their “most embarrassing” experience (Gorski 2022). I’m

talking, of course, about traditional school book fairs. I know that they are well-loved by many—but consider the traditional model. Is it inclusive to turn our libraries into mini-stores each fall and spring, becoming for-profit satellites for publishers? To create and sustain events that habitually embarrass our students’ families?

The typical school book “fair” does not align with its name. Students are unintentionally sorted into two groups—those who *can* afford to purchase items at the event and those who *cannot*. And yet. Book fairs can generate excitement for reading. They offer a pathway to more books in the home. Book fairs generate high interest among teachers. Can we create programs that generate reading excitement, increase the number of self-chosen books in the home, and champion reading for pleasure—all while preventing inequitable sorting by excluding learners? We can if we bravely reimagine the school book fair to be something different. At our #TrueBookFAIRs, students select new books to keep from a bespoke fair collection of all new books that I have intentionally and lovingly curated to reflect our students and their interests. There is no cost to students. One student summed it up perfectly—and unknowingly named the event—by saying: “Seriously. They were Book UNFairs. You are having an actual BookFAIR.”

Be Brave with Me.

When we are here for our students, when we are building spaces that serve as incubators of both joy and belonging, it’s a kind of bravery. Even for an uncourageous person like me. In preparation for this article, I was looking back at our original list of eleven foundations that would boil down into the #LibFive, and I was struck by one I had forgotten: *Be*

brave with me. Be a safe place for my ideas, struggles, dreams, and goals. I can think of no better way to be here.



Julie Stivers is the librarian at Mount Vernon Middle School and the author/editor of *Include* (ALA 2022) in the *Shared*

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Finding Courage in the Heart of the School: The Library



Lia Fisher-Janosz

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“But where shall I find courage?” asked Frodo. “That is what I chiefly need.”

“Courage is found in unlikely places,” said Gildor.

—from The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien

Merriam-Webster defines “courage” (and “bravery,” its synonym) as “mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty” (2023). The definition implies that courage is an intangible something that can be found (or not) within oneself, and so it is. However, as Gildor’s response to Frodo indicates, that is not all that it is. Oftentimes, courage can become tangible, taking form and even providing a bastion or foundation for the internal personal bravery of the individual. The etymology of courage is Middle English (*corage*), from Anglo-French (*curage*, from *quer*, *coer*), and finally, from Latin (*cor*). Interestingly, the Latin and later Anglo-French words mean “heart.”

Why did I embark on this impromptu linguistics lesson? I wanted to establish a connection between courage and a place that, at first glance, might seem to many to be among the unlikeliest of places in which to find courage: the library. Yet I maintain that the library—public or,

as applies more directly here, school—is precisely and even profoundly the place.

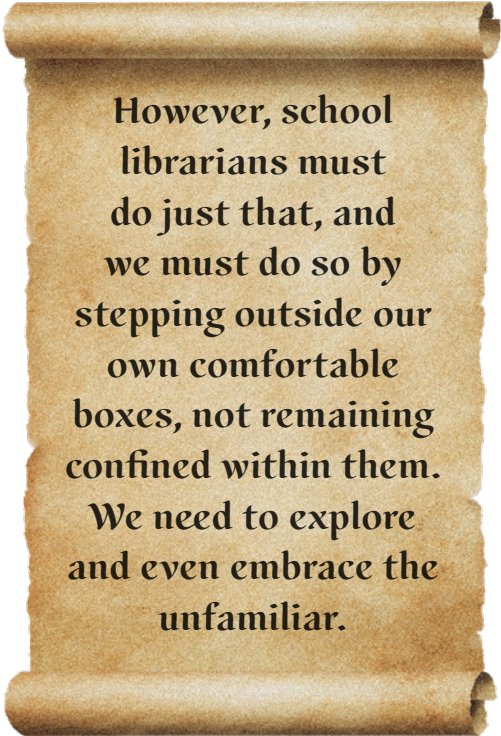
How so? In the books on the shelves and in the stacks, wherein are stories of bravery and resilience that can serve as models and inspiration; in the person of the school librarian, as curator of collected tales and caretaker of rights and freedoms; and, of course, in the structure of the library itself, the room where it happens, the spot that serves as safe haven to students (and indeed anyone) in need. Yet just as the strength of the human heart must be forged and maintained in certain ways to ensure its endurance, so must the library be built and sustained to create and keep up a sense of community, a culture of care and kindness, and a physical space where kids can feel safe and discover their courage. In this way, in this place, bravery has its center. We don’t call the library the *heart* of a school without reason, and in the library we find courage made manifest.

Collecting and Curating for Courage

Our AASL standards call upon us to establish and maintain “a collection of reading and information materials in formats that support the diverse developmental, cultural,

social, and linguistic needs of the range of learners and their community” and/or, more succinctly, to ensure that “all learning needs are met through access to information and ideas located in a diverse collection of sufficient size for the learner population” (2018, 60).

In plainer speech, this simply means that we must collect and curate titles that represent...well, anyone and everyone. This can be a daunting task for several reasons, among them



However, school librarians must do just that, and we must do so by stepping outside our own comfortable boxes, not remaining confined within them. We need to explore and even embrace the unfamiliar.

a lack of funding, which constrains a librarian to make difficult choices among quality resources and can force one to choose from a narrower swath of materials instead of a more varied one. Also, in an incredibly heightened sense today, a lack of empathy on the part of individuals or groups, combined with strong opinions often hostilely expressed, leads to an overabundance of pressure on a librarian to choose only certain and preferred texts. It now takes courage to curate and to build a collection at all, it seems.

However, school librarians must do just that, and we must do so by stepping outside our own comfortable boxes, not remaining confined within them. We need to explore and even embrace the unfamiliar. We can't merely rely upon what's traditionally been deemed as classic, or upon that about which we are most knowledgeable—and we must do so on behalf of all of our students, not merely a select few.

Building a collection to serve all our learners necessitates exploration and investigation prior to collection and curation. We can read (and read and read some more) journals like the one you presently hold in your hands. We can pick the brains of folks in our PLNs, attend conferences, and stuff our own noggins until they're nigh to bursting. We can surf the rough waves of the Web and social media, and more besides. Any of these may serve as factors in the formation of a collection that genuinely represents all of our students and their families.

We often hear and read about the intrinsic importance of libraries and collections having mirrors, doors, and windows, enabling students to see and find themselves and others. Speaking metaphorically, it is particularly difficult to build a library (or library collection) that has mirrors hung on its walls and also has windows and doors framed

within them. It is difficult to do this because challenges have been made, most often by those who only want to see their own reflections.

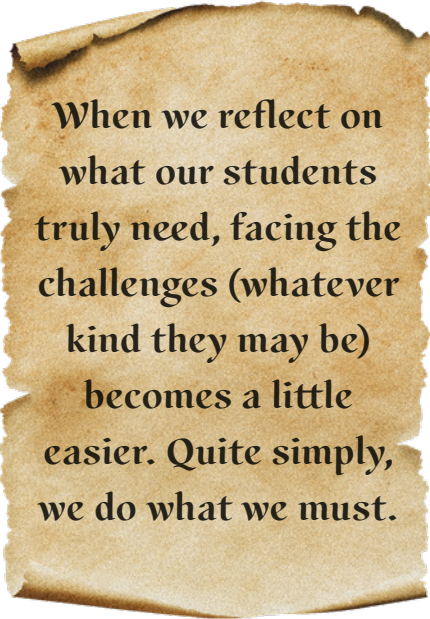
When we reflect on what our students truly need, facing the challenges (whatever kind they may be) becomes a little easier. Quite simply, we do what we must. We have a moral and even a legal imperative (if we're to interpret the Bill of Rights correctly and take it seriously) to make sure our collections truly represent the United States of America, which is neither one place nor one person, but many that together make one, as our country's original motto states: "*E Pluribus Unum*." Out of many cultures, experiences, and viewpoints comes one collection.

While I have mercifully not been on the receiving end of objections to our library's books and materials (not yet, anyway), I have experienced the frustration of not being able to afford to obtain what's most necessary for my students. Many of the children in our district are experiencing their own financial distress, combined with other problems. Such issues demand that these kids (like many others across the country and the planet) be extraordinarily resilient from a very young age, yet resilience is not an inherent trait, and neither is the courage associated with it. Acknowledging the predicament compelled me to apply for a grant from the ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities initiative focused on small and rural libraries, a grant which I thankfully received. I was thus able to purchase titles that centered on resilient characters and/or themes that related to resilience, as well as diversify our collection so that students could see not only themselves but others—others from whom they might be different, but with whom they might well share

a great deal. The books featured protagonists of different abilities, backgrounds, genders, personalities, races, and religions who came from a wide variety of locations, social and familial situations, economic statuses, and educational levels. The characters were role models, and their stories, while unique, were somehow universal; they served as powerful examples and tools for teaching children the ways to bounce back and be brave. From colorful, vibrant picture books to novels in verse to multichapter modern epics, they provided a blueprint for how to be courageous.

Communicating and Concretizing Courage

Our AASL standards encourage us to serve as models of effective communication, active seeking, astute discernment, ethical citizenry, diverse reading, and lifelong learning. To that end, we as school librarians must consider how best to display these skills and traits. There is no one way to do this; we should play to our own strengths. However, a number of constants should be consistent across libraries, a few of which are described below.



When we reflect on what our students truly need, facing the challenges (whatever kind they may be) becomes a little easier. Quite simply, we do what we must.

We have to have the courage to put ourselves out there. This can take many forms: one-on-one interactions with students, conversations with families, newsletters, club formations and subsequent meetings, websites, social media, and more. All of these are opportunities, chances to initiate and continue positive dialogue between the library and its patrons and stakeholders, and also chances to make sure that our own truthful, fact-based messages about supporting our learners are the ones received.

Librarians have to talk the talk *and* walk the walk. It's all about what we say and how we say it, *and* what we do and how we do it. Librarians must be welcomers, leaving the door open and the light on for anyone who needs and wants to come into our special type of classroom and clearly conveying to visitors that ours is a judgment-free space. We have to epitomize the behaviors we want students to emulate. This means that we ourselves have to act in accordance with the rules we set forth for children. We have to be kind; we have to care. We have to listen, and then respond accordingly and considerately. We have to be visibly excited about reading and enthusiastic about finding accurate information and learning new things. We have to be ethical practitioners, explaining the finer points of copyright to kids and showing them how to properly cite artists' and authors' work, inviting students to investigate the differences between paraphrasing and plagiarizing, and employing these same methods ourselves. There can be no double standard.

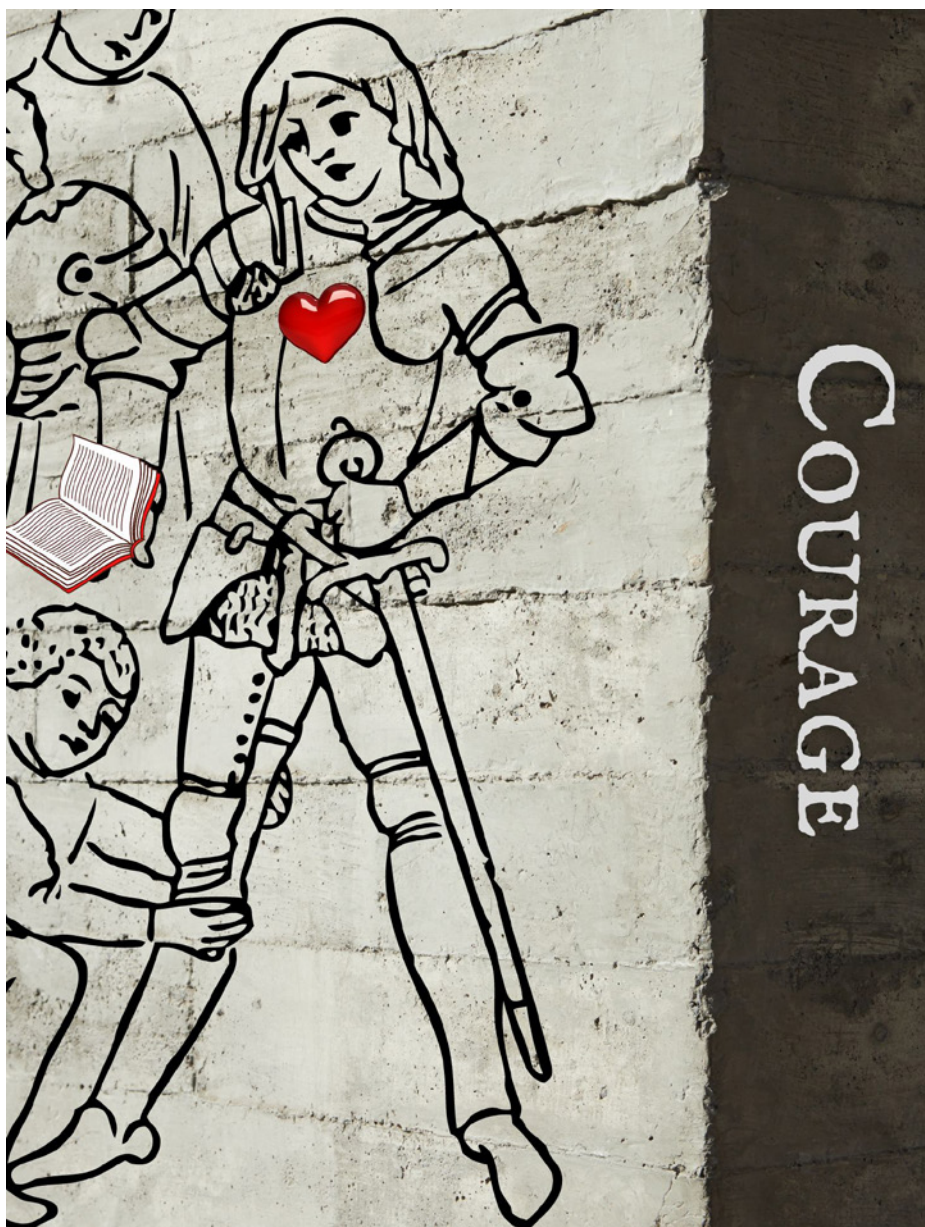
Finally, librarians must be the ones who uphold all of the above-mentioned ideals and principles in the face of politically motivated rhetoric, outright untruths, and personal attacks. We must do so while being calm and considerate when

others are contentious, accepting when others are antagonistic, and magnanimous when others are malicious. In other, better words, as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that" (1963). We can set no better example of courage for our students than this.

Creating Constructs of and Constructions for Courage

Our AASL standards charge us with "creating and maintaining a teaching and learning environment that is inviting, safe, adaptable, and conducive to learning" (2018, 59) and "creating an atmosphere in which learners feel empowered" (2018, 76).

When I began working as a school librarian about four and a half years



ago, I inherited a library that had been somewhat neglected. Because of state policies that adversely affected learners in small schools, the previous librarian had worked only part-time, and it was easy to tell that this was the case. Simply put, it just wasn't kid-friendly, and this pervaded both the appearance of the space and the accessibility of the resources within it. It seemed to me that if I couldn't make much sense of how materials were organized, and if I didn't feel at ease in the room, students wouldn't, either. I found this situation to be completely unacceptable. For me, it is intensely important that the library be extremely hospitable; after all, it's not just my library, it's the students'. The space is *our* place. Therefore, ensuring that kids feel comfortable, happy, and safe here is and will always be a top priority. The tone that I set—both verbally and visually—matters, and it matters a lot.

Therefore, I have put great effort into making the library more functional and have placed even more emphasis on the “fun” in “functional.” I moved different sections of fiction (previously separated by age/grade levels) together and consolidated (and weeded) nonfiction. I made new, more-visible shelf markers that also had illustrations for students who weren't yet text savvy, so that everyone could find books with greater ease and independence. I rearranged tables to encourage more collaboration and discussion during activities, and I ordered new, colorful flexible seating. I installed a Lego Wall (all by myself!) and transformed the old, dingy library workroom into a Hygge Hub. I added small lamps and fairy lights to offset the overhead fluorescent tubes, and let's not forget the floating candles! I regularly create bulletin boards that are artistic, cultural, interactive, literature-based, and/or thought-provoking, and I curate and put out

book displays in a similar vein. I talk to students, not at them; I listen to their stories as closely as they listen to the read-alouds I share.

What I've detailed here is just part of what I have done and plan to do in our library; as Lin-Manuel Miranda's Alexander Hamilton sang: “There's a million things I haven't done, but just you wait” (Miranda and McCarter 2016). That acknowledged, as time has passed it has become apparent that putting forth the effort to create a welcoming environment has enabled me to make strides toward establishing the library as a safe, judgment-free space. When students perceive this, they sense that they can be who they really are; it's actually easier to be brave.

My colleagues have informed me that kids really enjoy visiting the

library—which wasn't always the case in the past—and that they are excited to come to class sessions in the library. Students are becoming more enthusiastic readers and writers, and they're making connections between topics we talk about in the library and discussions they have in their classrooms. I believe that this is because they have begun to internalize the fact that, as the librarian in Angelica Banks' *Finding Serendipity* states: “Whether or not you can see it, the Library is always here” (2015, 101).

It is these children's haven, the place they know is safe, one to which they can return to again and again, whether it's fear of bullying that compels them to seek out its shelter, or a need for friendship, or just the desire for a great read, entertaining activity, or engaging project. They



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can be brave, because they know where to find courage. They can find courage in the library. It is in the pages of the books on the shelves, where stories are told of kid wizards (and hobbits) who bested dark lords, children who traveled through time and space for the sake of family and the basic human right to be different, freedom (and FReedom) fighters, revolutionaries and resisters, those who stood up (and sat down) for what they believed in. And it is in the person of the school librarian, who battles for students' right to read and be represented in those books on the shelves. Children can rest assured that, no matter where else they wander or whatever else they might go through, the library is always here for them. The school librarian is always here for them.

"I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, I shall find wandering more bearable: I shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again."

—Frodo, from *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien



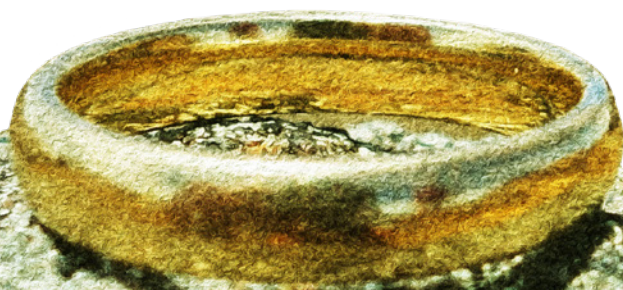
Lia Fisher-Janosz is the school librarian and instructional technology resource teacher ("book wizard" not being a standard job title) at Sharon Elementary School in Clifton Forge, Virginia. An ALA/AASL member, Lia was the recipient of an ALA Libraries Transforming Communities grant in 2021. She is also a member of the Virginia Association of School Librarians and was awarded VAASL's Dickinson Scholarship in 2021 and acknowledged as the organization's Roanoke Regional Librarian of the Year in 2022. Lia recently graduated from the School Librarianship program at Longwood University, where she received the Lancer graduate student award in 2021. She loves to write and sometimes blogs for Knowledge Quest and is passionate about aesthetics, equity, intellectual freedom, and social-emotional learning. Lia can be found on Twitter and Instagram @lebff, or on her website www.reginalibris.org.

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Testifying In Front of the NYS Committee on “The Future of NYS Libraries”



Arlene Laverde

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My Path

Almost twenty years ago I thought I took one of the most courageous steps in my professional career. After sixteen years as an educator and achieving tenure, I decided to go back to school and get my MLS. It is a step that I have never regretted, but it is a step that opened up a side of me that I didn't know existed.

Prior to library school, I am embarrassed to admit that my knowledge of school librarians was the tired stereotype. They were shush-ers, keepers of books, and spinster cat ladies. As I was a married mother of two and the owner of a large rottweiler, you might ask why I went to library school? I had been an elementary school teacher for fourteen years before my administration put me in the library as the "teacher assigned." I was curious about my new position, but no direction was provided, so I did what I thought school librarians were supposed to do: story time and book circulation.

I was fortunate enough to have professional development through the New York City Department of Education's Office of Library Services, and it was there that I learned that an MLS could take me on my next great adventure. There was more to being a librarian: information literacy

When asked to describe myself many adjectives come to mind: hardworking, serious, a touch funny, and passionate. I would not necessarily call myself brave. However, as an NYC public educator for the last thirty-two years I have found myself in a variety of situations in which I have had to find the courage to act.

skills to be taught, programs to be put together, and collections that needed developing.

When asked to describe myself many adjectives come to mind: hardworking, serious, a touch funny, and passionate. I would not necessarily call myself brave. However, as an NYC public educator for the last thirty-two years I have found myself in a variety of situations in which I have had to find the courage to act.

Bravery is the ability to be courageous and fearless in the face of danger, fear, or intimidation. It is a quality that all humans have, but not everyone has had reason to use it. There are different types of bravery such as physical, moral, and emotional, just to name a few. Each one has its own definition and characteristics, but they all share one

thing in common, which is being able to face your fears.

Twenty years ago, if you would have asked if it takes courage to be a librarian, I probably would have chuckled. Many people outside of librarianship and education do not know the tremendous amount of mental, emotional, and moral fortitude it takes to be in this profession. It is without a doubt a scary time to be a librarian in the United States. Across the country, school and public libraries are under attack. Librarians have been vilified. Their careers and even their lives have been threatened. Books are being challenged and removed from schools at an alarming rate. But librarians persevere. We understand the importance of standing up and speaking out for what is right. Now more than ever school librarians need to be advocates.

My foray into library advocacy followed a similar path to my library career and began quite accidentally. A school librarian I was mentoring through the intricacies of the New York City Department of Education was heavily involved in AASL. While I mentored her through bureaucracy, she mentored me in our professional organization.

She encouraged me to run in 2019 for the position of New York City School Librarians' Association (NYCSLA) president. I thought it would be a great opportunity to help librarians. I helped take our small organization and built it up to offer professional development and networking possibilities throughout New York City. While advocacy was discussed, it wasn't really my focus.

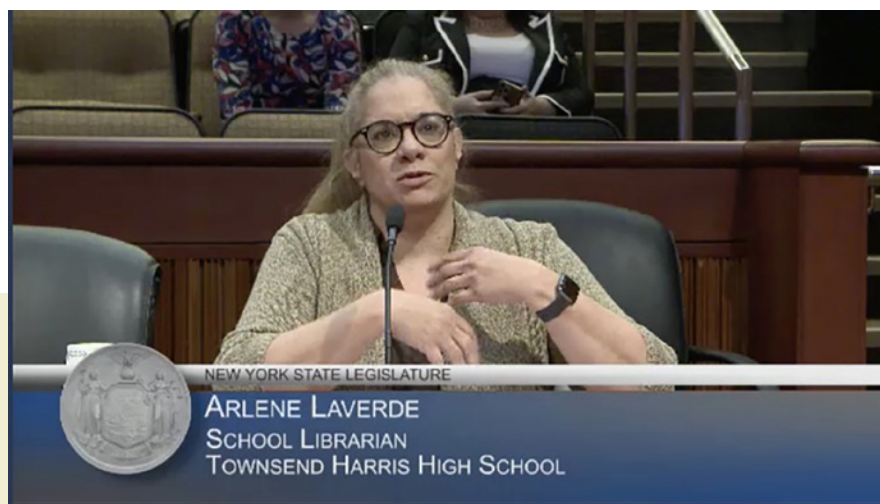
Then COVID happened. COVID brought to light so many things that are wrong with the education system around the country. We learned that, although we talk about

equity and access for our students, we are not even close to equity and access being a reality for all. In New York City we learned that Michael Mulgrew, the president of one of the biggest teachers' unions, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), had no idea what school librarians did nor that they were teachers when he stated that school librarians wouldn't be able to apply for remote summer school jobs because they required "brick and mortar buildings" to work. This was the tipping point. NYCSLA was able to create an e-mail and social media campaign that illustrated exactly what school librarians do, and how effective the librarians are. This campaign lasted until Mulgrew apologized to school librarians and walked back his statement. In June 2020 the UFT passed a Resolution of Support for School Librarians. (Read it at <http://bit.ly/3DZPmD6>.) This was the start of my fight for school libraries and librarians. I now never miss an opportunity to share my passion and speak up for our profession.

My Testimony

On December 15, 2022, I faced one of my biggest fears: public speaking. The irony is that I am a teacher librarian who speaks publicly all of the time. I speak to large groups of teenagers when I teach. I speak to large groups of educators when I present. And I will speak to anyone about my favorite topic: school libraries. As the president of the New York Library Association (NYLA), I was invited to give testimony at the New York State Assembly's Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology's public hearing on the future of New York State's libraries. The specific purpose? "The Committee seeks testimony about the issues and challenges libraries are facing in providing resources, programs, and services to their communities" (Jean-Pierre n.d.). This was a type of public speaking that I never imagined I would be asked to do.

My knowledge about giving testimony was limited to what I had seen on C-SPAN and in the movies. Needless to say, it wasn't very much, and it was certainly intimidating.

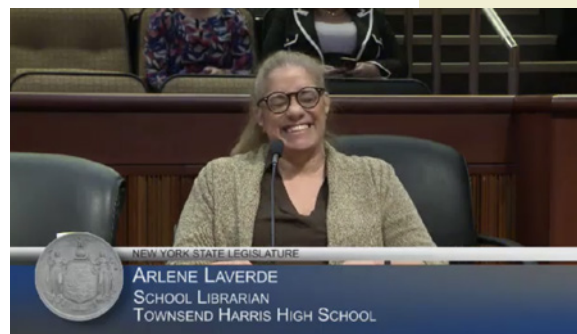


My knowledge about giving testimony was limited to what I had seen on C-SPAN and in the movies. Needless to say, it wasn't very much, and it was certainly intimidating. I had about two weeks to prepare a written statement. My focus: school libraries. I must have started composing my statement a dozen times. I wanted to be compelling and intelligent and, if possible, funny. I didn't want to be scared, but I was.

That morning I drove up to Albany, a little over three hours away from where I live. On the ride up, trying to ease my nerves, I gave myself a pep talk and sang along with the radio. Then I arrived, and before I knew it, I was in Hearing Room C, the "Roosevelt" hearing room, of the Legislative Office Building. Stadium seating, vaulted ceilings, a semicircle of seats for committee members, and a table with three chairs and microphones front and center for testimonials—I was here, and it was happening. Everyone in the room was here because of libraries and how important they are. Everyone who would be testifying felt as passionately as I did. My fear began to subside.

I was fourth on the agenda (see <http://bit.ly/3lJn5a>). As I walked down the stairs to begin, my heart started racing and my hands trembled. I took a deep breath and said to the panel, "Sorry, I am a little nervous." I then began my testimony. I spoke about how school libraries are crucial to equity in education, how our libraries are safe places for everyone in our communities, and how libraries are places that promote reading, teach information literacy, and foster social-emotional learning. Most importantly, I stressed that schools need a state-certified librarian in every school to ensure that our students have robust library programs. I spoke for five minutes. I spoke passionately and from the

Everyone in the room was here because of libraries and how important they are. Everyone who would be testifying felt as passionately as I did. My fear began to subside.



heart. And then I was done. When I walked out of Hearing Room C, I left with my head high and a smile on my face. I faced my fear and lived to talk about it.

When I began my journey in 2003, I thought that being a school librarian would mean reading stories and circulating books, but now I know that being a school librarian means learning how to effectively raise and magnify not just my voice but the voice of other school librarians in service of students and learning communities. Sometimes, we must face our fears to do just that.



Arlene Laverde is a New York State Certified Librarian at Townsend Harris High School, and adjunct instructor and

academic advisor for the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at Queens College. A member of AASL, she is a program co-chair for the 2023 AASL National Conference Committee. Arlene is the current president of the New York Library Association and past president of the New York City School Librarians' Association.

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ARTICLE

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS



**STANDING UP
AND SPEAKING
OUT FOR LGBTQIA+
STUDENTS, FAMILIES,
AND BOOKS**

Danielle N. DuPuis

danielle_dupuis@hcpss.org

In 2011 my principal approached me and asked if I'd be willing to sponsor a club, specifically a Gay-Straight Alliance. I'll be honest and say that as a queer person, I wasn't terribly familiar with GSAs. And at the time, I don't think I was alone in my ignorance. Even as recently as 2019, only nine out of fifty states reported that at least half of secondary schools in their state had GSAs (Gabriel, Stratford, and Steed 2021). Yes, that means that more than half of secondary schools in forty-one of our states do not have a GSA. There certainly wasn't a GSA when I was in high school. In fact, my gay friends and I were all members of the Key Club instead—a very similar situation to that of the characters in Brent Hartinger's *The Geography Club* (HarperCollins 2003). Ultimately, my answer was, “Of course. I'd be happy to be the club sponsor.”

Creating a Conference

Sponsoring our GSA—now SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Alliance)—has been very rewarding over the years as it has given me the opportunity to get to know my students better than when I see them for classes or when they pop into the library. I've also learned more about what they need and want from their high school experience. By 2018 I was feeling pretty good about the progress we

had made with creating a safe space for queer kids through the club. Or at least I was feeling good until one day after school at a club meeting, students shared that they didn't feel accepted by their peers or their teachers. I listened to them explain that they felt it was a lack of education rather than deliberate or malicious behavior—at least when it came to teachers. What the students were expressing is supported by a recent *Education Week* article that shared, “Teachers fear parental pushback; they face a dearth of curriculum options, and even when there are resources available, they may not know what to look for; they may not have received training on the subject; or they simply don't want to get something wrong” (Najarro 2021).

After I listened to my concerned students, we talked. Then, we shared ideas for how we could address this issue. There are so many ways to be an ally to LGBTQ+ youth, but at our school nothing had been organized or communicated to students, staff, or families. We wrote down a wish list for a “Rainbow Conference,” in which students, staff, parents, and community members could come together and learn more about the community as well as what they could do to help. One of the first suggestions for providing a more safe, inclusive school according to

Lambda Legal is to “invite local activists or representatives from LGBT organizations to speak at your school” (n.d.). And even though this information wasn't available at the time of our planning, that's exactly what we did.

The first phone call was made to Kevin Naff, a former graduate of Hammond High School in our district and current editor of *Washington Blade*, and he agreed to present a session titled “Behind the Scenes of the LGBTQ Movement.” I kept making calls, and soon I had more than a dozen individuals committed to presenting at the conference. I created a presence on social media and put together a website. Grants and donations were procured, and our first Rainbow Conference was set to take place on May 15, 2020. All in all, it was about a two-year process from start to finish. Unfortunately, registration for the conference opened just as the pandemic began, and things got a little hectic. We had to quickly pivot from a face-to-face conference to a virtual one. But even virtually, the conference attracted around 250 librarians, other educators, students, parents, and community members.

We had succeeded in our mission to educate educators, students, and the community about LGBTQ+ issues.

Conference Schedule from the 2020 Rainbow Conference

9:00 am - Behind the Scenes of the LGBTQ Movement
 9:00 am - Creating Community Through Play
 10:00 am - Transition: Living as a Trans Person
 10:00 am - Question, Persuade, Refer Training
 10:00 am - Self-Awareness of Protections for LGBTQ People: A Discussion on LGBTQ Rights
 11:00 am - Rainbow Reads
 11:00 am - Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention
 12:00 pm - Not as Cringy as it Seems: Dissecting Today's Image of YA LGBT Literature (And Why it Matters)
 12:00 pm - Why LGBTQ+ Rights are a Church-State Separation Issue
 1:00 pm - It Gets Better with LGBTQ+ Stories
 1:00 pm - Supporting Rainbow Youth - It Takes a Community
 2:00 pm - Supporting Non-binary Students and Educators in School Systems
 2:00 pm - Support for Transgender, Non-binary, and LGBQ students: A Discussion
 3:00 pm - LGBTQ+ Inclusive Loving-Kindness Meditation

For full conference details and presenter information, please visit our conference archives at bit.ly/HCPSSRainbow

Listening to students was essential in learning about the deficits in their (and their teachers') learning that needed to be addressed. The conference was such a success that we did it again in 2021, this time doubling the sessions offered and registering more than 300 participants. Our third conference is scheduled to occur again on

May 6, 2023, this time adding an in-person option with an exhibition hall, bookmobile (to check out all the awesome books promoted by our local librarians), and outdoor activities. Funds to hold this conference were received through the It Gets Better Project's "50States, 50Grants, 5000 Voices" grant.

Visibility Matters

A year into planning the first Rainbow Conference, my school was putting an end to their student-created magazine, *The Vision*, due to a lack of submissions and a lack of interest in editing and designing the magazine. The name *The Vision* already fit as a perfect name for a queer magazine, as "vision" ties closely with "visibility." So, with permission and a name adjustment, the *Rainbow Vision* literary magazine was created. It was promoted throughout our school system by high school media specialists, and teachers of English, art, and GT (gifted and

talented) classes. We sought entries from LGBTQIA+ students and allies, and used the magazine to provide them with a means of artistic and creative expression.

According to Stephen T. Russell et al. (2021) four strategies can promote school safety for all students:

- creating inclusive enumerated policies,
- providing support and training to school personnel,
- establishing student-led clubs such as GSAs, and
- providing access to LGBTQ-related resources and curricula.

By creating this magazine, we not only gave students access to LGBTQ-related content but also a means of self-expression. They would be able to contribute to as well as design it. Much like the Rainbow Conference, rather than focus on just our own



ONE OF THE QUESTIONS ON THE READ THE RAINBOW REGISTRATION FORM IS “WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS BOOK CLUB?” AND THE RESPONSES ARE ENLIGHTENING AND AFFIRMING FOR WHY THIS BOOK CLUB IS SO **NECESSARY.**

school, submissions were accepted from all high school students in the county. In 2020, our inaugural year, we received thirty-five entries and published thirty of them. Initial funds to print the magazine were received through a grant from Teaching Tolerance (now Learning for Justice). After publication of the first volume, I received a number of e-mails from students and teachers asking if there would be a middle school version of the magazine. And so, the magazine was opened to middle school student entries. In 2021 we received sixty-five entries and published thirty-eight works in our second volume. In 2022 we received eighty-three entries and published fifty-three of them in our third volume. Each year students from the GT Intern/Mentor program have expressed an interest in working on the magazine and have participated in the editing and layout processes. As I write this in February, I currently have a high school senior intern and a freshman volunteer

working on editing and laying out the fourth volume of our magazine, which will be published in May 2023 and featured at our local county book festival, Books in Bloom.

Reading the Rainbow

Origins

Reading and writing go hand in hand. You have to have writers to have readers, and to be a reader, writers have to create content. While my job provided me with the opportunity to give students access to borrowing books, there is also something very special and wonderful about actually owning a book. As a librarian in 2020, I was acutely aware that not only were LGBTQ+ books being challenged across the country, but I also saw that LGBTQ+ authors were getting uninvited from school visits and book festivals. To assist in creating a more-positive culture for queer books and queer kids, I created a book club called Read the Rainbow,

a book club that would not only provide free quality books to students, but would also bring in the authors of the books to speak with and inspire our young readers and writers.

I crossed my fingers and applied for a grant, which I received in 2020 from SEL in Action to begin the work. I wrote to authors, telling them about the club and asking if they would consider joining us for a book club meeting. I'd say at least 85 percent of them responded, and of those who responded, 95 percent gave a resounding “Yes!” Because this book club is 100 percent virtual for authors and participants, it is open to all. While it is widely promoted within the county, we've had students join from out of county, out of state, and, in a few cases, from out of country.

Process

A few guidelines I established when applying for the grant I still follow for each meeting.

1. Only students are eligible for the free book, but adults are welcome to participate in the club.

2. If a student accepts a copy of the book, they are committing to attend the meeting. If they do not attend, they may still register for and attend future book club meetings, but will not continue to receive a free book.

3. Books are purchased from local bookstores, and each copy of the book is mailed directly to student participants.

Most recently, I had to add an additional rule: Students receiving the free book must be residents of the United States. It is just too expensive to mail books to folks in other countries (though I did for a few students prior to updating the guidelines).

During a club meeting, I ask that privacy be maintained and that students lead the questions and conversation with the author. The book club started with an average of around forty registrants per club meeting, and now we are averaging around eighty folks registering for each book club meeting, with around 60 percent of those actually attending. While books are provided only to the first fifty student participants, the club is open to anyone who wants to join. In several cases, we've been able to provide more books than our original fifty copies thanks to generous community members who each purchase an additional copy of the book for the students. The book club has been a wonderful way to not only encourage folks to read, but also to learn more about the writing process from the authors themselves. The grant funds have run out, but the book club has been able to continue thanks to our partnership with a local organization called CARY (Community Allies of Rainbow Youth); its members have

*Opportunities are not
just for those who identify
as part of the LGBTQ+
community, but also those
looking to be supportive
allies or to learn more*

been instrumental in continuing to procure funds so that our club can continue.

Students' Views

One of the questions on the Read the Rainbow registration form is "Why are you interested in participating in this book club?" and the responses are enlightening and affirming for why this book club is so necessary. One teen wrote in to share that the book club was getting them out of their reading slump. When registering for *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, another teen mentioned that it seemed like an amazing book to read over the long break and looked forward to having an opportunity to meet others their age who enjoy reading, and who could identify with different aspects of the book. Teens have also mentioned wanting the chance to join a book club but not having the time or opportunity to do so previously.

I send out an optional and anonymous feedback form after each meeting. One of the questions is: "The mission of Read the Rainbow is to promote LGBTQ+ literature written by LGBTQ+ authors in order to bring awareness and advocacy for LGBTQ+ topics, interests, and issues. Do you feel this was accomplished?" While the feedback is always

supportive, it is also sometimes surprising and gives new perspective about things I hadn't previously considered such as this anonymous student response, "I really do [think the mission was accomplished]. By attending these book clubs I get exposed to more books and I'm able to talk to older LGBTQ adults since I don't have any in my life otherwise." To see all the books we've read so far, please see the sidebar.

Keeping the book club virtual even after face-to-face activities have resumed has allowed us to continue providing a safe and accessible space for participants. While many of the students learn about the club through social media, from their schools' media specialists, Rainbow Representatives, and educators who help to advertise the club, many register based on recommendations from their peers. Last school year, through a district level grant from SEL in Action, a Rainbow Representative was established at each school in our system. Rainbow Representatives are staff members who are allies and advocates for the LGBTQIA+ community. The Rainbow Representatives receive information regarding upcoming topics and events of interest that are then communicated by the rep to their school communities (with supervisor and/or principal approval). (To learn more about our Rainbow Representatives, please visit the website included in the "Learn More About" list.)

In the recently updated eighth edition of *School Library Management*, Julia Torres shared, "Students need to feel that the library is a partner with other community organizations that support them so they do not see it as an extension of the oppressive system that aims to suppress their will, rather than liberate it" (2022, 59). We have been able to partner with CARY, but also with our local

Read the Rainbow Books

Read the Rainbow typically meets every two months during the school year, dependent upon author availability, scheduling, and funding to purchase the books. Since its inception in 2020, Read the Rainbow has featured the following books and authors:

October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard by Lesléa Newman

If I Was Your Girl by Meredith Russo

The Henna Wars by Adiba Jaigirdar

The Black Flamingo by Dean Atta

The Gravity of Us by Phil Stamper

The House in the Cerulean Sea by T. J. Klune

Cinderella is Dead by Kalynn Bayron

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Kings of B'More by R. Eric Thomas

The Prince and the Dressmaker by Jen Wang

Cemetery Boys by Aiden Thomas

You Should See Me in a Crown by Leah Johnson (our most recent read)

FAMILY Read the Rainbow Books

So far, our FAMILY Read the Rainbow has included:

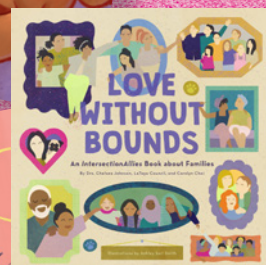
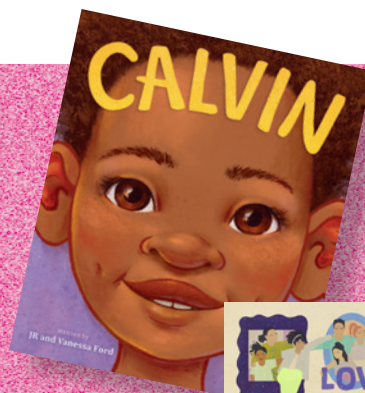
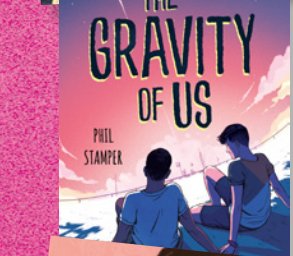
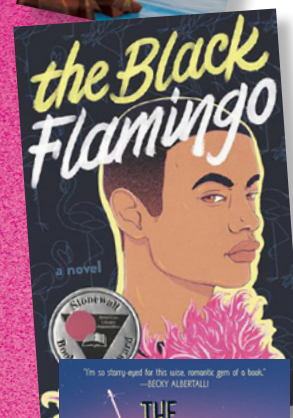
And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

Calvin by J. R. Ford and Vanessa Ford

When Aidan Became a Brother by Kyle Lukoff

Love Without Bounds by Drs. Chelsea Johnson, LaToya Council, and Carolyn Choi

This June we will be welcoming Michael Genhart and highlighting his book, *They're So Flamboyant* as part of our optional HCPSS Pride Week activities.



PFLAG chapter and other local organizations and businesses who wish to support our club. It's been a great way to bring visibility to LGBTQ+ supportive organizations, but also to the library media program.

FAMILY Read the Rainbow

Read the Rainbow has since expanded to include younger students and families with our FAMILY Read the Rainbow program. This program is a little shorter to accommodate our younger participants. The participants are able to hear authors read their stories aloud, and time is provided for question and answer sharing. Recently, during our program for the book *When Aidan Became a Brother* by Kyle Lukoff, we were delighted to have both the author and the illustrator, Kaylani Juanita, present to share their process

for creating and illustrating the story as well as Kaylani's perspective on interpreting the characters.

FAMILY Read the Rainbow meets two to three times during the school year. The schedule is largely dependent upon author availability and funding for books. To see all the books we've read so far (as I write this in February), please see the sidebar.

An Invitation

A common concern—and rightfully so—is receiving pushback from the community. Has there been pushback regarding LGBTQ+ programming for students? Sure. Absolutely. Mostly this pushback has come from those on social media who are not associated or linked to our county school system. Any time you introduce a concept or idea that shifts a mindset, you will get

pushback from others both outside as well as inside your organization. Knowing this, we've emphasized that the opportunities offered are all optional. Participants are invited, not coerced. Nothing is a requirement.

Also, the opportunities are not just for those who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, but also for those looking to be supportive allies or to learn more about the community. Would you be openly outraged over receiving an invitation to a birthday party for someone you didn't know very well? It's possible. But showing your rage wouldn't be a very good look for you as a human—unless you have a track record as being a curmudgeon. As with any invitation, you can either accept or decline. Framing our programs and publicity as invitations to all not only helps to make our community

This summer, take the community learning with you.

www.ala.org/aasl/CoPs

AASL Communities of Practice

AASL's Communities of Practice (CoP) are an opportunity for AASL members with a shared learning need to come together. Member passions, interests, or concerns can be shared through best practices, collective learning, and resource aggregation and development.

- Digital & Technology Tools
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
- Information Literacy Instruction
- Literature/Reading Promotion
- Teacher Collaboration

more visible and inclusive, but it also allows for those not comfortable identifying as part of the community to still participate from an ally standpoint. Allies are an integral part of the advocacy work needed to advance rights and protections for all of our LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and families within our community, across the country, and around the world. The need for their continued support and involvement can't be emphasized enough.



Danielle N. DuPuis
(she/her/hers), a National Board Certified Teacher, is currently the LGBTQIA+ Initiatives Specialist

for the Howard County (MD) Public School System (HCPSS) in Ellicott City, where she loves finding innovative ways to educate, unify, and collaborate with students, staff, community partners, and families. She has worked as a library media specialist in HCPSS for seventeen years, having started her career working for the Howard County Library System twenty-one years ago. When not working or spending time with her wife and three children, she enjoys long walks with friends, reading books, and exploring a wide variety of creative interests that include writing books, and poems. She has published four professional resource books, which include *The Adventures of Super3: A Teacher's Guide to Information Literacy for Grades K–2* (Linworth 2010) and *Big6, Large and In Charge: Project Based Information Literacy Lessons for Grades 3–6* (Linworth 2013), both coauthored by Annette C. H. Nelson. Danielle hopes to one day become a published YA or children's book author and to produce a children's video series featuring an array of humans and puppets.

Moving Forward

After receiving such positive and encouraging feedback from each of the aforementioned programs, it was clear that there was not only a need for LGBTQIA+ programming to accommodate LGBTQIA+ students and families, but also a need to bring visibility and education about the LGBTQIA+ community to others who were interested in learning more. So, this past school year, the idea was introduced to include an LGBTQIA+ Initiatives Specialist into the school district budget for the 2022–2023 school year. I, along with

members of CARY and many others in my district, sent e-mails, made calls, and presented at community forums in support of this position. In one of my earliest phone calls with a board member, I was asked, "Who will champion this position?" And it wasn't until later that I realized: We are the champions. The librarians, other educators, parents, and advocates who continue to show up and put themselves out there in defense of LGBTQIA+ kids, books, authors, individuals of all ages, and families. We are the champions.

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Learn More About:

- Books in Bloom <<https://www.booksinbloommmd.com>>
- CARY (Community Allies of Rainbow Youth) <www.cary-hoco.org>
- HCPSS and supporting LGBTQIA+ youth <www.hcpss.org/supports/lgbtqia-youth>
- Rainbow Conference, Read the Rainbow, and Rainbow Vision <<https://sites.google.com/hcpss.org/hcpssrainbowconference/home>>
- Rainbow Representatives <www.hcpss.org/supports/lgbtqia-youth/rainbow-reps>
- Follow Us:
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Facebook @HCPSSPride
- Grant Credits:
It Gets Better Project's 50 States 50 Grants <www.50states50grants.com>
- Learning for Justice Educator Fund <www.learningforjustice.org/educator-fund>
- SEL in Action Awards <www.education-first.com/sel-in-action-awards>
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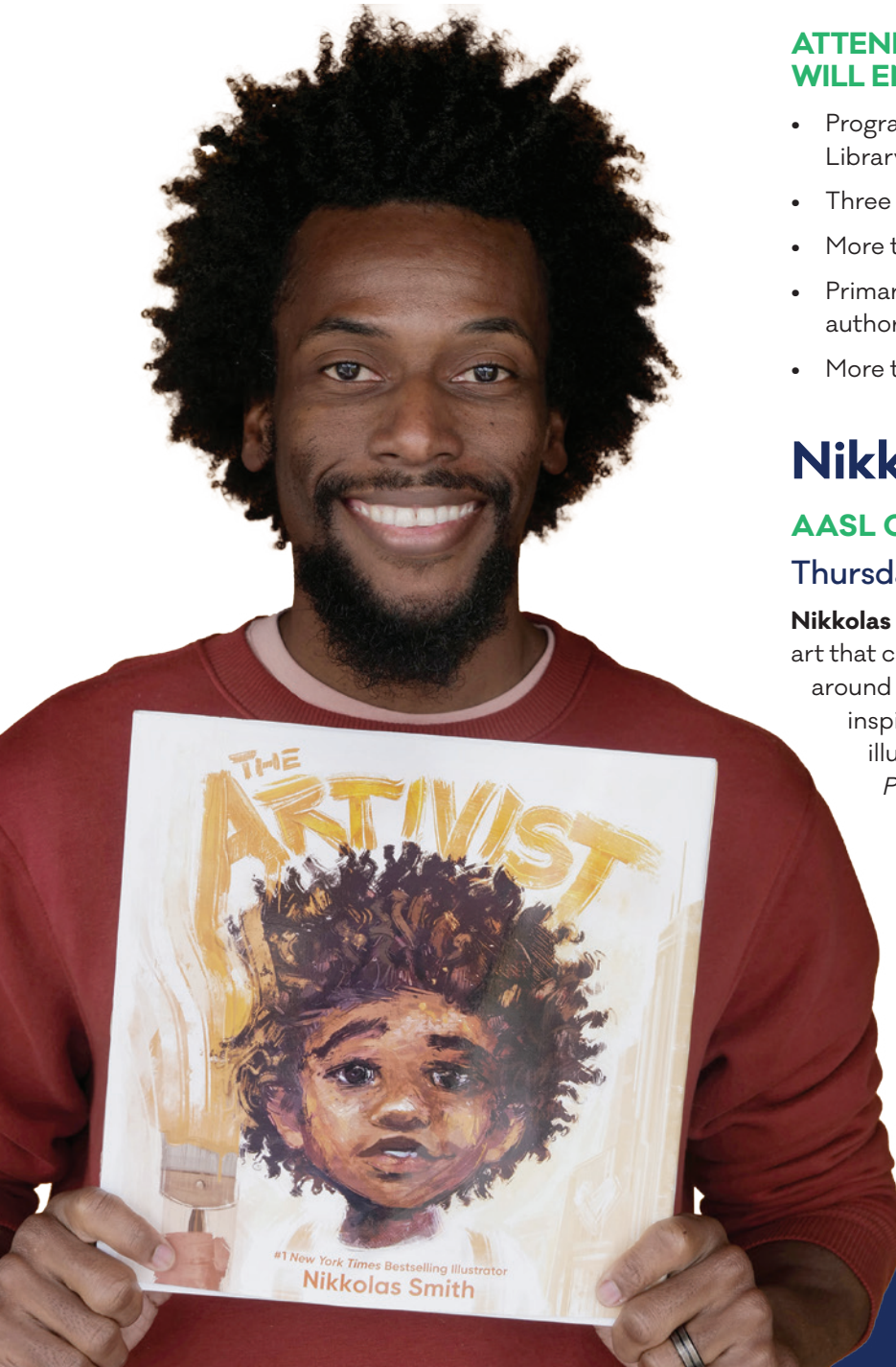
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Nikkolas Smith

AASL OPENING SESSION KEYNOTE

Thursday, October 19

Nikkolas Smith, ARTivist, creates captivating art that can spark important conversations around social justice in today's world and inspire meaningful change. He is the illustrator of #1 NYT Bestseller *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water* written by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renée Watson and his highly anticipated written and illustrated picture book *The Artivist* is coming out on September 5, published by Kokila Books/Penguin. He is a proud 2016 White House Innovators of Color fellow.



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HOTELS

Through our official housing partner, onPeak, AASL provides reduced hotel rates and travel discounts for your trip to Tampa, FL. For detailed information on housing dates and policies, visit the conference website at national.aasl.org.



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Hilton Tampa Downtown \$220

Aloft Tampa Downtown \$199

Make your reservation!



ARTICLE

The **WHY,** **WHAT,** **& HOW**

of AASL
National
Conference

Your AASL National Conference committee is planning for another one-of-a-kind experience and sharing the what, why, and how of AASL National Conference.

In a little over six months, the school library community will come together for the 2023 AASL National Conference in Tampa.

This conference is dedicated solely to the educational needs of teacher librarians and school library staff working at every grade level. Since meeting in Salt Lake City, many of us have had some of the most challenging years of our careers. Being able to share not only our concerns and challenges but also our triumphs and successes will help strengthen our practice and serve as a reminder of the support available through a national network of school library professionals.

Your 2023 National Conference committee has been working hard to put together a slate of dynamic sessions, keynote speakers, and fun activities. As co-chair of the committee, I can attest that conference attendees will be inspired by innovative lessons, hear from amazing authors, and have much to explore in the exhibit hall. My fellow committee members can tell you *why* you should attend, *what* you can expect while attending, and *how* you can make the most of your conference experience. To paraphrase Louisa May Alcott, I can tell you I am untroubled by the storms that are facing our profession because my colleagues are showing me how to navigate those rough seas and providing guidance to reach shore.

Looking forward to learning and celebrating alongside everyone in The Big Guava!

Paige Battle

Conference co-chair
Grant High School,
OR



I flew to Kentucky to attend my very first AASL National Conference in 2019, and at that conference I decided I would attend every future AASL conference. There were so many informative sessions, opportunities to meet authors, and school librarians from across the country to network with. I enjoyed it so much that I wanted to be a part of the next conference. I was fortunate to serve as the Social Media co-chair for AASL21 in Salt Lake City, and am thrilled to be able to support Florida school librarians in Tampa this October as AASL23 National Conference co-chair. I could spend all day talking about why my favorite conference (by far) is an AASL conference—there are so many things to say—but the number one reason that I will never miss an AASL conference is the chance to spend several days surrounded by colleagues and friends whose passion in life is school libraries. We have the best job in the world, and getting to attend a conference and share our love of what we do at a conference with thousands of others is just icing on the cake. I hope to see you there!

Amanda Jones

Conference
co-chair
Live Oak
Middle School,
LA



WHY

WHY DO YOU ATTEND THE AASL NATIONAL CONFERENCE?

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR FIRST-TIME ATTENDEES?

Professional growth is why I attend AASL. Learning is what librarians do. We are the ultimate collaborators and life-long learners. I bring so many great ideas back to my school. When

I look through the sessions and meetings, I consider the growth goals I have for myself and look for sessions that will help me with my goals. Attending the AASL National Conference is also about connections. How great is it to see and learn from librarians that are part of your professional learning community?

My recommendation for first-time attendees is to make connections. Whether you are traveling with a group from your district/state or solo, be social. Sign up for social events. (Check your e-mail while at the conference. There may be additional opportunities.) Use the AASL conference page or app, check out the concurrent sessions, and see who else is attending. Think about that favorite article you read in *Knowledge Quest* or other trade publication; often that author is attending the AASL conference and possibly presenting.

Donna Mignardi

Authors co-chair
Calvert High School,
MD



The AASL National Conference is absolutely the highest quality professional development available for school librarians. Whether you're just starting out in the field or you're a seasoned veteran, you'll find a wealth of robust offerings to inspire and inform your work. You'll meet authors, gain insights on trends and current issues, and network with others who really understand your world.

Amanda Moss Struckmeyer

Authors co-chair
West Middleton
Elementary, WI



Every time I go to a conference—whether local, state, or national—it is usually to network and learn. My reasoning for attending this year's

AASL conference is a little different. I do plan on networking, and I do plan to learn a lot, but I am going to AASL this year primarily because libraries and librarians are under attack. Florida librarians need our support, and what better way to support them than by showing up in their state and proving how knowledgeable, helpful, and caring librarians are?

Arlene Laverde

Program co-chair
Townsend Harris
High School/
Queens College, NY



My why for attending is learning new things and continuing connections with others. As an educator of school librarians, my work can be a bit isolating. Therefore, attending the conference offers me an opportunity to spend time with others who have similar interests. It is a great opportunity for school librarians and others who support school libraries to connect and learn more about the profession. I attend to increase my professional knowledge and to connect with others. It's like a reunion. I am excited to learn from and catch up with old friends in the field, and make new friends while learning with and from them. As a bonus, Tampa is a beautiful city. What a great place to learn and connect!

Pamela R. Moore, EdD

Research
Empowering
Practice co-chair
University of South
Alabama, AL



WHAT

WHAT IF NO ONE ELSE FROM MY DISTRICT IS ATTENDING?

If you feel like a solo librarian because you are alone in your district, don't have a travel buddy, or are new to the profession, there are many ways to make connections if you're willing to reach out to make new friends. Many librarians make conference connections and then room together for future events. Before the conference, start following #AASL23 on Twitter and Instagram. Don't hesitate to use the hashtag to look for a connection or to DM a conference committee member with questions. On Wednesday evening of conference week, set aside time for Dinner with a Local Librarian. You'll meet a group of ten to twelve other attendees, and the reservation is already made so it's easy-peasy. The group will include a wide variety of librarians, and you'll be welcome and sure to meet some interesting people! During the conference, some state chapters will have a meet-up or dinner out. Also look for "Conference Committee" ribbons on name badges and stop one of us to say "Hello!"

Carolyn Vibbert

Program co-chair
Sudley Elementary
School, VA



Opportunities to meet and talk with other school librarians are everywhere. Even if it is outside your comfort zone, start conversations with librarians sitting next to you in sessions. You already know you have one thing in common. Ask if they want to have lunch with you. Make it a point to meet and greet people, and you will find the experience career changing. Who knows? You could meet a new friend and create your own professional learning community.

Karen Scott

Program co-chair
Thompson Middle
School, AL



WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT FOR AASL NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN TAMPA?

I come to AASL to connect, learn, grow, and visit a new part of the country. School librarianship can be a lonely field, but the conference helps you make connections with people who share your interests and concerns, and helps you realize you have help from all around the country. Come enjoy a few days with your librarian friends and enjoy beautiful Tampa!

Blake Hopper

Social media
co-chair TNT
Primary School,
TN



Well, I am from Nebraska. We had a very cold and snowy winter. So I'm excited about Tampa's warmth and sun. I love that we're meeting in Florida, supporting their school librarians and showing our solidarity. Being in a room full of school librarians allows me to take a deep breath, shed the outside world, and focus on what I love: being the best school librarian I can. It is a whole room full of people experiencing that same moment. We support each

other, and we're all there to make our corners of the U.S. the best places that we can.

Mandy Peterson

Social media co-chair
Shelby-Rising City
Public Schools, NE



I am so excited for the energy that AASL National Conference attendees bring! I attended my first AASL in 2005, and in the many National Conferences I've attended since, each event introduces me to new people, perspectives, questions, and goals for many dimensions of school librarianship. From the knowing glances at the airport—Are you going? I'm going!—to the fast friends we make in line for coffee or in the keynote audience, there is a shared curiosity that drives our participation in the first place, and sustains us through all those conference events and all the way home. Something that adds to that energy is the unexpected moment: an encounter with someone you admire, an amazing session you found your way into because another was full, or a connection that turns into a beautiful collaboration, a new job, or a valued friend.

Rebecca Morris

Research
Empowering
Practice co-chair
University of
Pittsburgh School
of Computing and
Information, PA



I am most looking forward to making connections with people! This is the first in person national conference since I became an LMTS three years ago. I hope to make new friends and learn new ideas from the great wealth of information that will be shared.

Bonnie Halprin

Local Arrangements
co-chair
School District of
Osceola County, FL



HOW

HOW CAN I FUND MY CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE?

There are a number of funding opportunities to attend library conferences for professional development. For instance, the Bound to Stay Bound, Inc. Travel Grant is offered specifically for first-time attendees of an AASL conference. I received one of these grants to attend my first national conference. While the deadline for this grant has passed this year, look for other organizations offering travel support. Consider educator grants and scholarships from educational organizations and foundations such as the Association of American Educators Foundation and the National Education Association Foundation.

Mitzi Mack

Local
Arrangements
co-chair
Hillsborough
County Public School,
FL



My strategy is one of long-term planning. I use a financial service (SmartyPig) that tracks individual savings goals. My conference funds don't get mixed up with my fund for a

new laptop or for new skylights. Each month money transfers automatically into my conference fund so that I can pay to attend AASL every other year.

Carolyn Vibbert

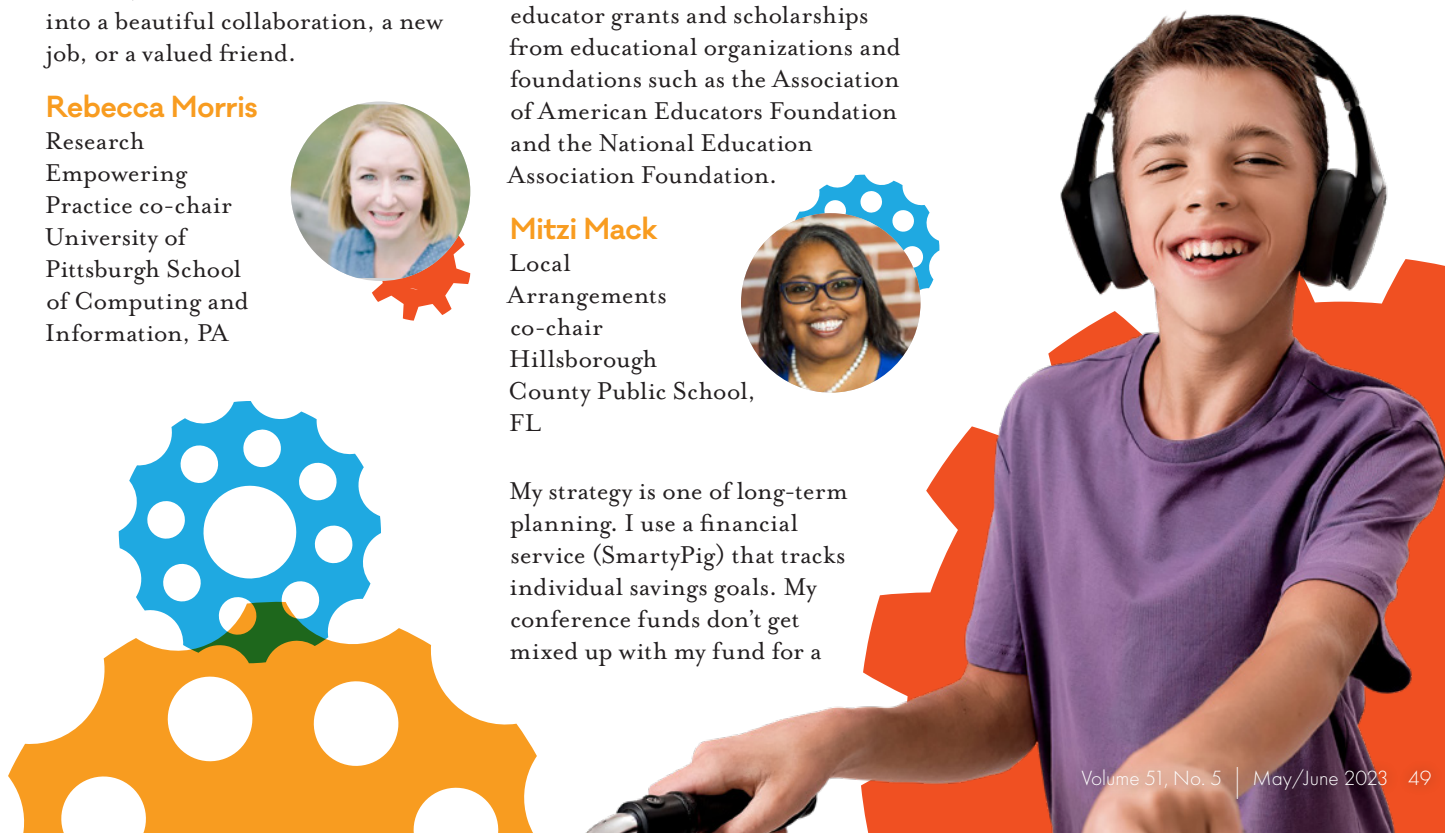
Program co-chair
Sudley Elementary School, VA

HOW SHOULD I CHOOSE MY SESSIONS?

Look through the session book carefully and pick sessions that can help you on your journey to become a better school librarian. Pick more than one for each timeslot in case there is a cancellation or a session is full. If you travel with others, split up and head off to different sessions and then at dinner talk about all the amazing things you learned in yours and hear about all the amazing things they learned in theirs. It will energize you and have you excited about going back to your school and implementing some of what you have learned.

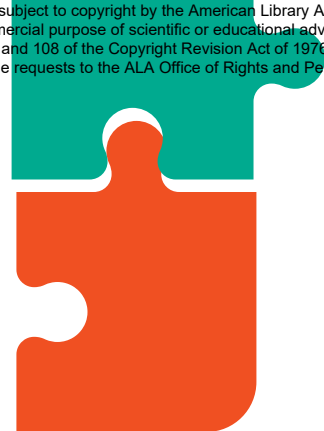
Karen Scott

Program co-chair
Thompson Middle School, AL



SCHOOL LIBRARIANS CREATING SPACE FOR **CONNECTION** AND **COLLABORATION**





Donna Wake, Helen Hu, and Erin Shaw

dwake@uca.edu

The role of the school librarian (SL) is multilayered and complex. SLs work as curriculum experts to connect teachers with each other and with the necessary resources to do their work well. SLs support schools in unifying curricula among classes and between grade levels and subjects, encourage cross-curricular views of content, and share knowledge of available resources (Purcell 2010).

SLs often assume the role of technology leaders in their buildings and/or districts (AASL 2018; Johnston 2012). They collaborate with teachers in their buildings to plan in-class instruction using technology to engage student learning and center competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration in ways that move past simple substitution to transformational uses of technology that empower student voice (Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011).

Given all that SLs do in service to their colleagues and their students, they hold a unique position in school spaces as teacher leaders. SLs “lead from the center”—a term that has been used to describe the centrality of SLs in school spaces (Dees et al. 2010).

Our Research

When schools closed in March 2020 for the COVID-19 pandemic, we were interested in exploring the work SLs were doing to support their communities. SLs had the knowledge and skills to support school stakeholders in navigating hybrid and online teaching and learning spaces—a skill set with increased relevance and value during the pivot to online learning. So, we wanted to understand how SLs were pivoting their role in the school community to “lead from the center.”

Our state had recently adopted and implemented a professional learning community (PLC) model to support student learning. In this model, educators work together in teams to engage in inquiry and action research. Done with fidelity, the PLC model mirrors the community of practice (CoP) framework (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015). CoP describes a formal or informal support network of professionals who share a common goal, concern, or interest. Based on this foundation, members engage in activities and discussions to support each other.

CoPs create spaces for professionals to solve problems, seek information, share experiences, pool assets and resources, and build members’

Because of local educators’ familiarity with the PLC model, we felt teachers would be accustomed to working together to solve problems like those presented during the pandemic. SLs could use those structures to support colleagues with technology-based teaching and learning during the pandemic using methods and tools with which many teachers were unaccustomed or unaware.

capacities. In these spaces, leadership happens when the knowledge and skills of any one member of the community can contribute to the growth of others in the team. In this way, members of the CoP lead through sharing and facilitation to support other members.

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Food for Thought, Springboards for Discussion, Inspirations for Action

The table below includes more details about what study participants thought and did during and after the school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Issues	Quotes / Examples from Participants
SLs articulated a shared need to support K–12 students and teachers during the pivot to online learning. All SLs in the study expressed a desire to be involved in solving the problems presented during this time.	"Most people don't fully understand what librarians bring to the table. It would be nice to be at the table. After they push stuff out, I can show them better ways to have done it. But they didn't ask." "I could contribute technology skills and information. I'm not being utilized to help teachers with online sources and resources for online lessons." "I'm a librarian...I can do it all. Seriously though, if they would include me on the leadership team, I could cut out a lot of extra time and work spent trying to reinvent the wheel." "I tried to let [my] principal know that I could do more than just check out books, but she and the other teachers just did not know how to use my knowledge ... I really hope they will start to want to use tech more after this pandemic." "I want to know more about how to 'sell' to teachers the value of the librarian." "Librarians need to be more politically savvy to advocate to legislators. When the budget takes a hit, they need to think about schools, accessibility, and provide for every student, not just students with internet and devices." "Districts need to start thinking about internet access and device access – equity is important to think about now!" "Our teachers need support training on accessibility features (special education, ELL)." "I think the word 'intentional' is key. We need to be explicit and intentional in helping [students] navigate this kind of self-guided learning." "The kids are fine with technology. Fine. The complication is the teacher [and we can help them]." "Administrators have so much to think about, decide, juggle while keeping core subjects at forefront, they forget about the library." "How do I help kids not feel overwhelmed so they don't shut down?" "I want to know how to keep kids engaged and help with their soft skills like persistence, reflection, and time management."

Issues	Quotes / Examples from Participants
SLs created ways to insert themselves into local structures to support students and faculty.	SLs offered and led informal, as-needed teacher professional development, offering technology professional development and support to teachers and students. SLs created informal, as-needed PLCs for teachers (and for their own professional groups), and supported students and faculty through innovative technology applications (e.g., Bitmoji forums, Facebook live posts). SLs reported showing classroom teachers how to use technology more meaningfully and powerfully. Examples included creating a Facebook group for a math class, supporting a special education class on Zoom, offering Google training for grade-level teams, and co-creating content (e.g., a Google Jamboard, a Bitmoji forum with digital phonics-based sound cards, and YouTube screencasts). "I offered Google training for one grade-level team." "I helped our math teacher create a Facebook group." "I joined a Zoom call to help [special education] teachers think about how to engage their students." "We librarians superimposed ourselves in the [school PLC] structures to share resources, lessons, etc." One SL posted resources for her students on her own webpage and did screencast book talks while also providing free online books. One SL noted that she connected students to online libraries.
SLs identified themselves as practitioners with specialized knowledge and skills that were useful in supporting teachers, students, and families in online learning (e.g., curriculum, technology, resources, pedagogy). They contributed their knowledge, skills, and resources to build one another's capacities.	SLs noted their extensive knowledge of technology platforms and applications that could have been useful to support online learning during the pandemic (e.g., screencasting, video demonstrations, social media, Bitmoji, Flipgrid (now "Flip"), Zoom, Google Classroom, Padlet, Kahoot!). SLs noted their abilities to plan project- and problem-based learning curricula "My biggest skill set is in project-based learning and cross-curricular content. I would have loved to see more of that in the AMI [Alternate Methods of Instruction] packets." SLs noted their knowledge of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and online resources that schools could have utilized during this time. "I have knowledge of apps, sites, resources. For example, history could be using AR Traveler. I know particularly resources that can integrate into Google Classroom." SLs emphasized their knowledge of curriculum and noted strengths in understanding horizontal alignment of curriculum and in supporting teachers (pre-pandemic) to make cross-curricular connections. "I have the ability to connect teachers across curriculum because of knowledge of what teacher A and teacher B are doing." SLs noted their own pedagogical knowledge and spoke about their abilities to support students, families, and teachers. "I know my students' personalities, interests and abilities.... I am well versed to supply engaging and innovative information." "I know how to provide choice and give options for students' voice." SLs noted expertise in technology integration and pedagogy. "We need to have kids and teachers practice teaching online [before the skill becomes essential]. Have kids in the library and have the teacher online teach from classroom space. To allow kids to be in those spaces and have those discussions with them." "I know how to provide choice and give options for students' voice."



One SL in the study noted she was “an untapped resource.”

pandemic. SLs could use those structures to support colleagues with technology-based teaching and learning during the pandemic using methods and tools with which many teachers were unaccustomed or unaware.

We created a qualitative study to center the voices of SLs in the field and explore how they were involved in the move to online teaching and learning (Wake, Hu, and Shaw 2022). We engaged sixteen local (to us) SLs in Zoom-based focus group events in June 2020. All sixteen SLs served at the building level within fourteen districts in our state. Our goal was to listen to the SLs reflect on their early pandemic experiences. As such, the research questions for this study were:

- How were school librarians (SLs) included in district and school planning and implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What knowledge and skills did school librarians (SLs) have that would support the planning and implementation of online learning?
- What concerns did school librarians (SLs) have for students and teachers during the planning and implementation of online

learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Our Zoom sessions followed a structured protocol, ensuring consistency. Participant responses and discussions were transcribed and analyzed so that we might better understand how SLs were involved in school initiatives in response to the pandemic.

Findings

Our team was aware of the barriers that may inhibit SLs’ ability to lead in school spaces, including administrators’ and other educators’ lack of awareness of the role of SLs (Hartzell 2002), archaic and incorrect stereotypes and misconceptions of the role of SLs (Purcell 2010), and a lack of collective vision for school technology integration (McLeod 2015).

Indeed, the SLs in our study confirmed structural barriers that initially limited their involvement in the early days of the pandemic. However, SLs in our study provided rich testimony describing their efforts to circumvent these barriers to connect and collaborate with colleagues. They described engaging in innovative moves independent of formal school structures to support students and families. They based

their responses to the challenges of the moment on their knowledge and skills with technology. SLs in our study described working within local structures by:

- leading informal teacher professional development sessions,
- forming ad hoc professional learning communities, and
- creating and sharing materials with teachers, students, and families.

SLs in the study spoke at length on the knowledge and skills they felt they possessed that were useful in support of online student learning, including:

- knowledge of curriculum (vertical alignment, horizontal alignment, cross-curricular connections, problem- and project-based),
- knowledge of technology,
- knowledge of available online resources, and
- knowledge of effective pedagogy for online teaching and learning.

Our SLs also acknowledged gaps in their knowledge and skills. They voiced a desire to continue learning how to support students in online learning, specifically in self-regulation, motivation, and engagement.

Finally, the SLs noted specific concerns for faculty and students. These concerns focused on equity and historically marginalized populations (e.g., students in poverty, rural students, English Language Learners, and special education students). SLs described limitations in providing online learning environments that are

student-centered and culturally responsive, affirming their role in creating learning environments that center equity and focus on the achievement of all students (AASL 2018).

Implications for Practice

Mapping the study findings to the CoP framework provided evidence that the SLs in this study were actively leading during the pandemic event to serve teachers, students, and families.

- SLs articulated a shared need to support K–12 students and teachers during the pivot to online learning. All SLs in the study expressed a desire to be involved in solving the problems presented during this time.
- SLs created ways to insert themselves into local structures to support students and faculty.
- SLs identified themselves as practitioners with specialized knowledge and skills that were useful in supporting teachers, students, and families in online learning (e.g., curriculum, technology, resources, pedagogy). They contributed their knowledge, skills, and resources to build one another's capacities.

Recommendations for the field include explicit inclusion of SLs in continued work to support teachers and students in online teaching and learning contexts. SLs in this study were minimally involved through the formal leadership structures in their spaces (e.g., managing websites, posting information on social media). One SL in the study noted she was “an untapped resource.”

Conversely, SLs in our study saw their role during the pandemic as teacher-leader. They detailed specific knowledge and skills they possessed to support online learning, including insights into the curriculum, depth of knowledge in best practices for technology integration, and extensive knowledge of open educational resources.

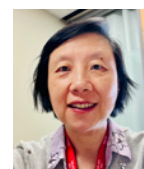
Conclusion

The findings of this study inform districts and schools of the potential of SLs in supporting teachers and students in online teaching and learning. These findings indicate that schools/districts can and should be more inclusive of SLs in planning for technology use in teaching and learning, formally positioning them as leaders in this work.

Despite a lack of formal involvement, all SLs in the study used their position, knowledge, and skills to insert themselves into informal school structures when they saw opportunities. Their work included offering and leading informal, as-needed teacher PD under their own auspices; offering technology PD and support to teachers and students; creating informal, as-needed

PLCs for teachers and for their own professional groups; and supporting students and faculty through innovative technology applications.

The SLs in this study wanted to lend their expertise, skills, effort, and time to support the teachers and learners they served. They acted as advocates for their profession and offered support to students and teachers. In doing so, these SLs led from the center (Dees et al. 2010) and saw their efforts to support colleagues and students as a natural extension of the work they do daily.



Helen Hu, PhD, is the Director of Educational and Student Success Center & Associate Professor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.



Erin Shaw, EdD, is an Assistant Professor who serves as the Library Media and Information Technologies Program

Coordinator at the University of Central Arkansas. Prior to joining the faculty at UCA, she served in K–12 education for 24 years— as a science teacher and as a school librarian. Erin is a National Board certified school library media specialist and was named School Library Media Specialist of the Year in 2014 by the Arkansas Association of Instructional Media.



Donna Wake, EdD, is the Director of Assessment and Accreditation & Professor at the University of Central Arkansas. Her

research interests include diversity, equity, inclusion; critical literacy, teacher education reform; and technology in education. She holds degrees from Temple University, La Salle University, and Hendrix College.



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