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Gabrielle Lamb

LambG@pitt.k12.nc.us

Gabrielle Lamb is a school librarian at D.H. Conley High School in Pitt County Schools District in North Carolina. She has been an educator and librarian for 22 years and enjoys encouraging collaborations across departments and disciplines. She is a member of ALA and AASL and is currently the Region 1 Coordinator for NCSLMA High School Battle of the Books. She served as the State Chair for the Elementary School Battle of the Books from 2022-2024, and from 2024-2025 was part of the NCDPI committee to revise the state's IMPACT standards.

Anticipating Fresh Starts and New Experiences

"Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known."

THIS SHORT BUT VAST SENTIMENT from Carl Sagan is one of my favorite quotes for two reasons. First, as a school librarian, it reminds me that in our profession we are always encouraging learners to turn to books to find knowledge. Second, it reminds me of the anticipation of each school year, and the promise of a fresh start and the unknown.

The quote is kind of screaming itself to me this year. After spending the past 22 years in elementary school as both a classroom teacher and school librarian, I am entering year 23 at a high school, and not just any high school, but the one I graduated from. If someone had walked up to my teenage self and told me that over 30 years later I would be one of the high school's librarians, I would have thought the *Candid Camera* producers were lurking nearby to get my horrified reaction. At the time, I had no intention of entering the field of education and every intention of moving out of the area and never returning.

Yet, here I am all these years later, and I can honestly say it's the most excited I've been to start a school year in more than half a decade. I am energized to work with teenagers, learn new things in a new location, and feel revitalized about my profession.

While this issue of *Knowledge Quest* doesn't have a true theme as most of our past issues have, the majority of the articles just happened to magically connect to

an overall sense of anticipating new experiences, especially a new school year. Immediate Past President Becky Calzada presents us with an article on AASL Conference 101, beneficial for those who will be attending the national conference for the first time and for conference veterans who might need a refresher. For those who are St. Louis bound in October, this one is for you!

My fellow North Carolina teacher librarian, Mollee Holloman, shares how school librarians can goal set in order to focus on creating specialized and impactful library programs. We know that we all wear multiple hats in our building and oftentimes that becomes completely overwhelming. By using patience and persistence, school librarians can set small, manageable goals each semester or year and then build these foundations each subsequent school year. Holloman's article includes many practical tips from both first-year and veteran school librarians. These can easily be adjusted and adapted to meet the needs of an individual school setting.

Dr. Daniella Smith outlines key strategies for new school librarians, including building professional relationships, managing budgets, developing collections, creating programming, and fostering community partnerships. Smith also describes how mentorship and planning can assist the school librarian in advocating for their value in the building by positively impacting learner achievement and success. As school librarian jobs continue to be cut in many states, being able to strongly champion our relevance is a timely issue.

Scot Smith gives us a look at the importance of advising and coaching pre-service school librarians during their time in graduate school. Our roles in the profession have changed over time and it is crucial that pre-service candidates understand that there are many complexities to the job, depending on the state, district, and specific school an individual is working in. Smith also discusses how the pre-service librarianship program at the University of Tennessee assigns job-embedded practitioners two mentors—one site-based (and usually a classroom teacher) and a non-site-based licensed librarian from another school

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in the district. This dual mentorship allows new school librarians to receive both school- and job-specific information and feedback, thus providing a stronger sense of community.

Finally, for anyone who has been considering taking on new leadership roles with the profession but feels trepidation, Jennifer Cooper's group Q&A shows it might not be as scary as you think! Interviews with past and current leaders from different state school library associations detail ways to get involved, their personal whys for getting involved, and how their state associations have been affected. We know that our state chapters rely mainly on volunteers, and as active members in these associations we must step up to continue to advocate for ourselves and our work.

As we all begin a new school year and, for some, new chapters in our careers and lives, I end with another one of my favorite quotes from an anonymous source: "Today is the first page of a new book; make it a good story."

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