

THE TEACHING LIBRARIAN

The magazine of the Ontario School Library Association

volume 12, number 2

ISSN 1188 679X

Literacy and
Reading
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Ontario
Directors of Education, District School Boards
Secretaries of School Authorities
Avis E. Glaze
Chief Student Achievement Officer
The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

Kit Rankin
Acting Assistant Deputy Minister
Secondary and Elementary Strategic Planning Division
March 31, 2005
Investment in School Libraries, K-12

DATE: _____
SUBJECT: _____

The government recognizes the critical role that school libraries play in improving student achievement. For many students, their only regular exposure to books, multi-media and research materials is through their school library. Having access to them enriches every child's learning experience.

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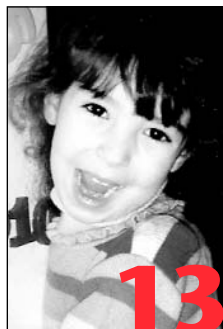
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THE TEACHING LIBRARIAN

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TL mission

THE TEACHING LIBRARIAN

is the official magazine of the Ontario School Library Association. It is published three times a year to support OSLA members in providing significant and effective library programs and services. *The Teaching Librarian* promotes library program and curriculum development that further the objectives set out for students and teachers by the province, school boards, administrators, teachers and parents. It fosters effective partnering with teachers and administrators, and provides a forum for sharing experience and expertise.

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TL guidelines

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| V. 12, no. 3 | Issues - Intellectual Freedom
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| V. 13, no. 1 | Volume 13 information and deadlines will be available soon on the OSLA listserv |
| V. 13, no. 2 | Volume 13 information and deadlines will be available soon on the OSLA listserv |

Articles of 1000-1300 words in length are welcome. Articles, when approved, should be accompanied by good quality illustrations and/or pictures. Text must be sent electronically. Pictures can be printed or digital (minimum size and quality are 4"x4" and 300 dpi). With photos which contain a recognized individual, please secure the individual's permission in writing for use of the photo. Photos taken at public events, or crowd shots taken in a public place do not require permission from the subjects. All submissions are subject to editing for consistency, length and style. OSLA reserves the right to use pictures in other OSLA publications unless permission is limited or denied at the time of publishing. Any questions about submissions should be directed to *The Teaching Librarian* Editor:

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We're feeling energized. That's really the best way to describe the mood at the OSLA Annual General Meeting during Super Conference, and at the first Council meeting of the year in March. After years of feeling like the proverbial voice in the wilderness of education funding and program cuts, this spring brings some concrete hope of progress.

"...the critical role that school libraries play..."

The latest news is, of course, the recent announcement from the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of the Ministry of Education of a large one-time investment of seventeen million dollars for the renewal of school library resources. The memo to school boards stated that *the government recognizes the critical role that school libraries play in improving student achievement*. The memo makes the connection between vibrant library collections and the development of a deeper love of reading and learning.

A very significant first step

While this grant does not address the long-term sustainability and vibrancy of school libraries and school library programs in Ontario, it is a very significant first step. The

initiative provides an important investment in the renewal of library resources for all Ontario students. Perhaps the most exciting aspect is that it demonstrates significant interest in school library issues from the Ministry of Education, and sets the stage for continued program improvement. OSLA congratulates the Ministry of Education on this initiative. OSLA and OLA together are working cooperatively with the Ministry and school boards to share our expertise in school library resource acquisition and program support.

A series of encouraging developments

The Ministry grant comes as the most recent in a series of very encouraging developments. As Roberta Henley reported in the last issue of *Teaching-Librarian*, the OLA is investing \$100,000 a major research study into school libraries in Ontario. The lack of Canadian information has been one of the barriers in our advocacy efforts. That our larger library community, through the full membership of OLA, supports us to this extent is very gratifying to OSLA.

Evidence-based practice

To support this research, OSLA Council is preparing concrete tools

ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

President's Report

Anita Brooks Kirkland

for our members to start collecting our own complementary evidence.

Our major project this year will be the creation of an Evidence-Based Practice Tool Kit for teacher-librarians. In addition to the significant budget we have allocated, we were gratified to receive a grant from OSSTF to support this project. Council has created a model for this exciting initiative, and Past President Roberta Henley has taken on the task of assembling and leading a writing team. Our goal is to have materials ready for publication early in the new school year.

The Ontario Digital Library is now moving

OSLA is also very encouraged by the recent announcement from the Ministry of Culture that begins funding of the Ontario Digital Library, and that advocates strongly for the full participation of the Ministry of Education in this critical initiative. The mission of the Ontario Digital Library project supports the interest the government has shown in the renewal of school library resources. The ODL would provide equitable access to quality electronic materials and databases for all students in Ontario.

The press keeps responding to fine effect

The Ontario Coalition for School Libraries (OCSL), formed last year by concerned authors, parents, publishers and supporters, held its first news conference on March 10, in Toronto. The news conference was in response to People for Education's latest tracking report, which shows significant decline in library staffing in secondary schools. As a result of the news conference, the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* both published feature stories. The CBC covered the issue with a feature story on the television evening news, and an interview with OCSL's Kathryn Blackett on Radio Noon.

So many promising things in so short a time

OSLA has sent a letter of congratulations to the Toronto District School Board on their announcement of the addition of 65 teacher-librarian positions in the elementary panel. We also have congratulated ETFO on the publication and widespread distribution of their brochure, *Quality Education Includes*. The brochure advocates for specialist teachers in Phys-Ed, Art, Music, and strongly advocates for more teacher-librarians in our schools.

Other projects for this year include the rejuvenation the OSLA Web site, with the establishment of an editorial board. Our goal is to make the site a more dynamic and timely tool for our members. We are also very excited about plans to raise the profile of National School Library Day, which will be on Monday October 24, 2005.

We are no longer the voice in the educational wilderness. With support from OLA and OCSL, we are being heard. Educational policy-makers have heard the evidence: there is now some concrete hope that this evidence is beginning to transform their understanding of the importance of school libraries. And with that hope, we have good reason to feel energized this spring.

Anita Brooks Kirkland ■

literacy and reading @ your library®



Welcome to Volume 12, number 2 of *The Teaching Librarian!* Our theme for this issue is Program; our focus is Literacy and Reading. As in every issue, *TL*'s columnists share resources and the authors of articles share a wealth of experience and ideas.

I've always thought the connection between libraries and literacy should be obvious. I mean, "libraries and literacy" – it's alliterative! How can anyone not see the connection? Unfortunately, the reality is that a stunningly high number of people, including an unfortunate number of school and district administrators, just don't see the connection.

I think the most basic reason for this disconnect is the focus on standardized testing, which has led too many people to define literacy as "those skills needed to achieve level 3 or better on the EQAO tests." This can – and has, in some cases – led to a dismissal as irrelevant of such research-based strategies as Free Voluntary Reading in favour of teaching skill sets such as "writing a newspaper article". I'm certainly not suggesting there's anything wrong with actively teaching skills. Far from it – learning a skill such as writing a summary or an opinion piece is useful and worthwhile. Unfortunately, the "literacy focus" has become so narrow that, for too many people, literacy has actually become divorced from reading, and so from books – and libraries. OSLA participation in the latest subject association contributions to *Think Literacy* should help validate the role

of teacher-librarians as reading and literacy specialists. Of course, this *Think Literacy* piece is about teaching skills, so, while it's valuable and welcome, we still have to deal with the challenge of reconnecting literacy and reading. And OSLA is continuing to work hard to help the Minister of Education and Ministry staff see and understand the connection between literacy, reading, and school libraries.

Which leads me directly to what I see as another significant reason for this disconnect. I think one of the reasons *TL*s and school libraries are not seen as central to literacy efforts is that we don't have a literacy and reading document to share. When we decided that information literacy was key to student learning and that *TL*s should play a major role in teaching information literacy, OSLA developed *Information Studies, K-12*, which helped us explain and validate our teaching role. Yes, we say that all forms of literacy are included in information literacy, but most people who aren't *TL*s (e.g. administrators) still use the terms separately. I've long thought, and am becoming increasingly convinced, that it would be useful to have a companion document to *Information Studies*, one focused on our literacy and reading role. Of course we do have a wealth of resources we can share, including OSLA statements about the purpose of the school library and the role of the teacher-librarian, the work of the OSLA reading task force, OLA's Forest of Reading programs, and research findings by people like Stephen Krashen and Keith Curry Lance. And, of course, you hold in your hands an issue of *The Teaching Librarian* containing a wealth of information and resources! But I do think

Brenda Dillon

it would be useful to have a “one-stop-shopping” document we could use ourselves and share with others. And I know I’m not alone in this view. In fact, OSLA has made numerous attempts to convince the Ministry of Education that we need a new, more comprehensive and official (i.e. Ministry approved) document in place of *Information Studies*.

In the meantime, as I mentioned, this issue does contain a wealth of information and ideas which should help you help others see you as a vital part of all of the ongoing literacy efforts. In this issue, you’ll find information about programs such as author visits and Battle of the Books, stories about the involvement of TLs and school libraries in school-based literacy initiatives, personal reflections, suggestions for engaging in Evidence-Based Practice, and much more. You’ll also find a brand new column, Book Buzz @ your library, which we hope will serve you well as a tool for both collection development and literature-based teaching. Do what you can to become involved in your school’s and board’s literacy initiatives. If your involvement isn’t welcome, then find some way to support literacy through your library program: start a book group; run an OLA Forest of Reading program, offer booktalks, engage in Reader’s Advisory work, put documents and articles in the hands of interested teachers, administrators, and parents, create a literacy tips column for the school newsletter.... Do something you can point to when asked how you’re involved in literacy efforts. And be sure to record what you do and its effect on student learning and love of reading.

Happy reading!

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Vol. 12, No. 2



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Libraries and Literacy: Demonstrating the Connection

Libraries and literacy; the connection is manifest, at least to us. Yet, the strong movement toward improving student literacy in Ontario's schools has largely ignored the importance of school libraries. OSLA calls this the "Big Disconnect". Traditionally, teacher-librarians have abdicated the task of supporting the connection between libraries and literacy to advocacy organizations such as the Canadian Coalition for School Libraries, the Ontario Coalition for School Libraries, and OSLA. Armed with a great body of research, these committed lobbyists have made progress with policy makers at the ministry level.

However, even with the research evidence and the support of strong school library advocates, many TLs find themselves bargaining for time and money with administrators who remained unimpressed by such data. School leaders want tangible proof that the contributions of teacher-librarians are having an impact on student learning in their

schools. Ranting about the evidence contained in statewide studies and statistics has had little influence. Until now, TLs have been frustrated by a disconnect of their own.

Evidence-based practice

The work of Dr. Ross Todd, especially his Ohio study, shows that we need to use our daily practice in schools to demonstrate this connection between school libraries and literacy and curriculum. His call for teacher-librarians to engage in "evidence-based practice" is a call for each of us to prove, on a very local level, that we have an impact on literacy in our own school communities. Dr. Todd's Ohio study broke down the teacher-librarians' role and quantified it based on the quality and quantity of help they provided to students/faculty. For more information about how libraries help students learn, go to

[www.oelma.org/
studentlearning/default.asp](http://www.oelma.org/studentlearning/default.asp)

Consider the principles of evidence-based practice in the context of the support

TLs provide for information literacy. According to Dr. Todd's research, students engaged in the research process place a high value on instructional interventions by teacher-librarians. However, just saying that we support students' information literacy skill development will not adequately convey to others our value. We need to provide proof. We need to be able to "show, not tell" others our contribution.

Plan before you start

The scenario is familiar. You partner with a teacher or are approached by an individual student asking for help with a research project. Immediately, you provide instructional intervention and are involved in the delivery of curriculum. But how are you going to show the students, parents, staff and administrators what you have done to enable student success? Planning to gather evidence should occur before you assist the students as they navigate one of the many valuable research models available.

The sequential structure of most research models provides the perfect opportunity for "mapping knowledge," one of the most useful evidence-based practice strategies. Evidence is gathered about what students know at the beginning, mid-point and end to show the growth and progression of student knowledge as a result of your instructional intervention.

For a comprehensive summary of all current research on the importance of school libraries see:

Ken Haycock's report, *The Crisis in Canada's School Libraries; The Case for Reform and Reinvestment*
www.accessola.com Click on Issues/ School Libraries.

Additional information:

Canadian Coalition for School Libraries.
www.peopleforeducation.com/librarycoalition/
Ontario School Library Association
www.accessola.com/osla/

Promote the results

The evidence can be posted on the wall of the staff room for all to see. No need to stop there. Why not ask students to rate the help you've provided them on checklists and surveys or ask for reflective comments about what they learned about the research process? Send the evidence home in newsletters, post it on bulletin boards, or feature it on your library Web page. Create exhibitions of the students' final products and have the students include reflections on their learning process. Be sure to invite your principal to see the evidence. In the battle for educational relevance, there is no room for modesty or self-deprecation. All of this evidence helps to demonstrate your value and to make the library and literacy connection evident.

For more information on the evidence-based practice movement as it applies to school libraries, consider the

following articles published in SCAN, a quarterly journal from the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. They focus on the interaction between information and effective student learning.

A good explanatory article for evidence-based practice: www.schools.nsw.edu.au/schoollibraries/scan/researchcolumns%2021-1.pdf

Practical evidence-based practice strategies: www.schools.nsw.edu.au/schoollibraries/scan/researchcolumns%2021-2.pdf

Make it a point to check out the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) where leading researchers and professionals work together to create school libraries that spark learning in information age schools around the world. CISSL is a global hot spot for school library action, where the synergies of school libraries, inquiry learning, literacies, and information technology spark ideas, research, innovation, and scholarship.

<http://cissl.scils.rutgers.edu/>

Evidence-based practice empowers teacher-librarians and gives them the tools with which they can prove their worth within their own schools. We've always known we were worth it. Now everyone else will too! ■

"Evidence based practice, where day-by-day practice is directed towards demonstrating the tangible power of teacher-librarians' contributions to schools' learning goals, is critical to future sustainability."

Dr. Ross Todd,
Rutgers University



Research Models

OSLA Model

www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=205&menuid=1344&pageid=995

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The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research. Second edition.

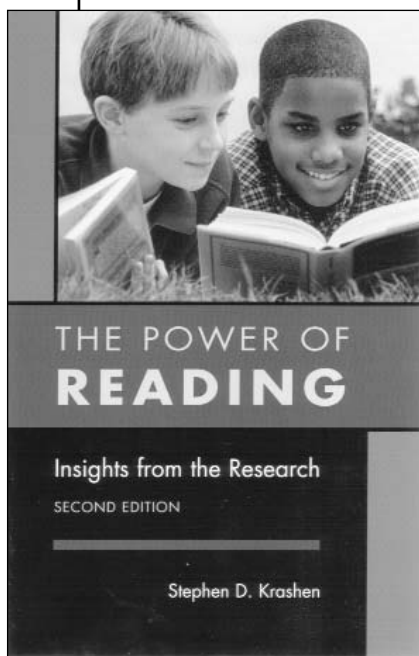
Stephen D. Krashen.
Libraries Unlimited,
2004. 1-59159-169-9.
\$33.00

After its publication in 1993, Stephen Krashen's *The Power of Reading*, quickly became the foundation for the assertion that free voluntary reading (FVR) is the most effective tool for increasing literacy. After reviewing 50 years of research studies on reading, Krashen offered a simple message, "amount counts", meaning that those who read more have higher levels of literacy than those who read less. He recommended that children be provided every opportunity to read for pleasure, as well as a wide variety of reading material, and be allowed to make their own choices. By doing so, they would become better readers. Krashen considers school and public libraries essential to literacy development because of their role in fostering independent reading for pleasure and because they provide reading resources of all types.

Eleven years after the publication of *The Power of Reading*, literacy and literacy testing have become the major driving force in education and in education spending in North America. The second edition of Krashen's work is a welcome addition to the

ongoing literacy debate. In this new edition, Krashen not only updates the research findings from the original work, but also adds valuable new material on how to encourage students to read more.

The Power of Reading is easy to read and is well organized into three major sections: The Research, The Cure, and Other Issues and Conclusions. In the first section, Krashen updates the material in the previous edition by adding research studies done in the past 10 years. He then comes to the same conclusion: that the research shows that free voluntary reading is the best method of creating better readers and better writers. In the second section, which is



the bulk of the book, Krashen offers many insights on how to encourage independent reading. Of special interest are his observations on access and the role of libraries. Particularly valuable are

his comments on comic books, graphic novels, teen romances, magazines, and other reading material sometimes "frowned upon". There is also a chapter on reading management programs such as Accelerated Reader. The final section of the book has a discussion of writing, the effect of television, and ESL students.

The Power of Reading, second edition is a must-have professional resource for all school libraries. In fact, it is a must-have professional resource for all schools. It should be read by teacher-librarians, principals, and literacy teachers, and then used as the basis for discussion and action in schools.

Helping Teens Cope: Resources for School Library Media Specialists and other Youth Workers.

Jami Biles Jones.
Linworth Publishing
Inc., 2003. 1-58683-121-6
\$52.73

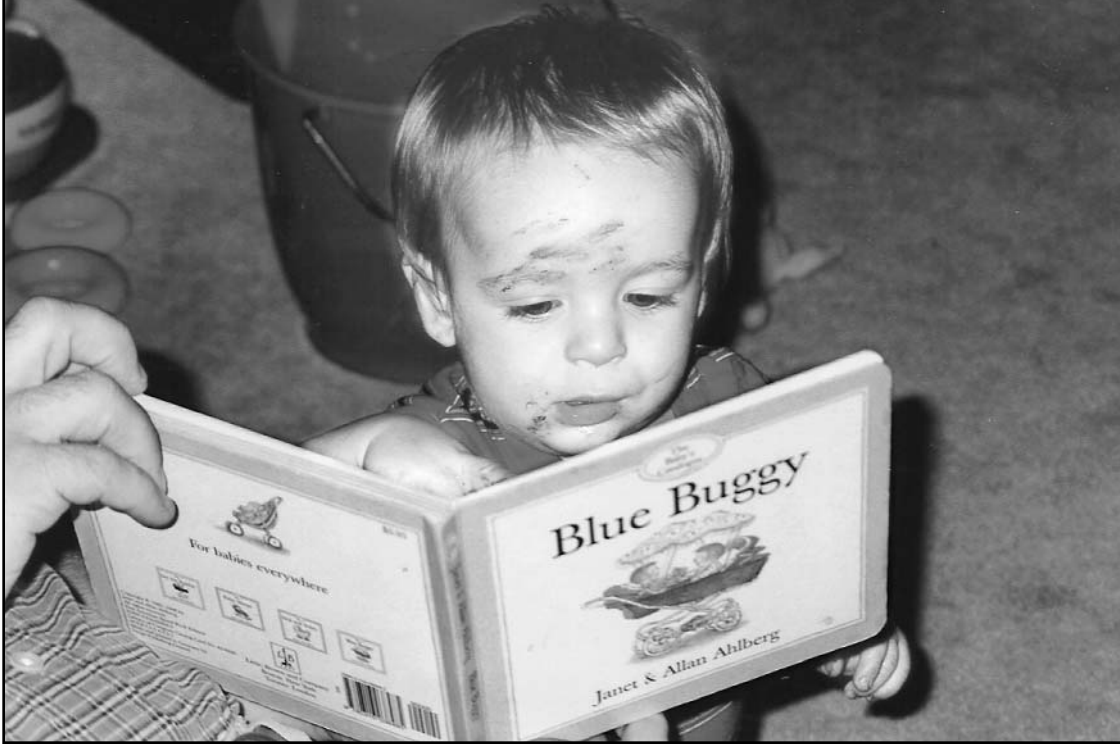
This book is written with the premise that librarians can make a difference in the lives of teens and promote healthy teen development by encouraging reading, providing the right resources to help teens explore personal issues and problems, and by making connections. The book embraces the notion of "bibliotherapy," the technique of providing books to people who need help

understanding their emotional, psychological, or physical problems. It is also based on the concept of "resiliency," the notion that some children and teens are able to withstand great problems and bounce back, even though they are exposed to great risks, by developing and drawing on their resiliency.

Using bibliotherapy and resiliency as twin foundations, the author then provides valuable chapters on how librarians can help teens cope with issues such as neglect and abuse, substance abuse, depression and suicide, eating disorders and body image, self-inflicted violence, bullying, divorce, and teen pregnancy. Within each chapter is an introduction, with research information on the particular issue and how it affects younger and older teens, followed by an annotated bibliography of recommended books and electronic resources for middle school readers and for high school readers. A concluding section provides useful resources for youth workers, a calendar of events with Web sites, and a guide to interactive book-talking.

Helping Teens Cope is highly recommended as a valuable resource for high school and middle school libraries, both as a collection development tool, and as a guide to building awareness.

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Diana Maleszewski

*How has becoming a parent changed me as a teacher-librarian?
Here's a glimpse. Warning: true confessions ahead!*

I have been fortunate enough to spend most of my teaching career in the library. I love being a teacher-librarian. The variety in grades, people, and assignments, the huge number of great books and resources to purchase and read, and the chance to help students and staff excel are some of the elements that make this role so enticing to me.

In addition to this job, I hold another position with poor pay but incredible benefits – motherhood. My husband James and I have two children. Mary has just turned five years old and Peter is two years old. They are amazing, attractive, intelligent, and charming children, and I am NOT saying that just because I gave birth to them.

Using my children as tools

I have to admit that I have used my children as tools for promoting reading and research. It's not as bad as it sounds. For instance, the grade 6 students in my last school were studying space and I happened to mention that Mary knew a lot about the solar system. To make a long story

short, Mary ended up coming to the school one afternoon as a “guest lecturer.” She sang “Interplanet Janet,” read her *Planets* poetry book, and shared her revolving solar system model.

The students were delighted to meet her and extremely attentive. It was also a great way to springboard into my Partners unit, which included sharing information about space in new and unique ways.

I’ve also brought Mary to a school Snuggle Up and Read night. During the parent workshop portion of the evening, we demonstrated how to expand on text and have interesting discussions using picture books. Her favourite book at that time was, and had been since she was about three months old, *Ten Tiny Turtles*. This crazy counting book had been given to her by one of my friends, a fellow teacher-librarian, and we’d read it so

frequently that it was easy to use in our demonstration to parents.

A study in contrast

My husband is a writer so, between us and the children, our house is packed to the rafters with books. As you’ve probably already gathered, Mary is a voracious and eager reader. My son Peter, on the other hand, at first rebelled against this love of literacy. We read to both our children from a very early age. Mary would sit transfixed and as soon as she could

talk would say “GEN” so she could hear her favourites again and again.

Peter just did not want to sit still. Books were not interesting; the TV was his mistress. While Mary did not watch television at all until she was 18 months old, Peter took advantage of being the second child to watch his older sibling’s shows alongside her. Who would have thought that a teacher-librarian could have a “reluctant reader” in the house? What’s a half-decent teacher-librarian to do? Thankfully, I can now report that Peter brings us books to read to him. While the sample size is, admittedly, small, I consider Peter my very own action research project on boys and reading. So far, he’s confirming the findings of other studies with his preference for chunky board books on non-fiction topics such as vehicles and animals and “gimmicky” books like ones with flaps and squeaking parts. The books he likes have few words and good pictures. Watching my daughter “read” one of these books to my son makes me very happy as a parent and as a teacher-librarian. It’s like having a small-scale reading buddies program right in my own home!

My teacher-librarian heart

There are many things I’ve done as a parent that I wouldn’t necessarily recommend as a teacher-librarian. Teacher-librarians get the scoop on the best of children’s literature. I can always justify purchasing two copies of a fabulous book – one for my school and one for my own children. Unfortunately, Mary’s tastes don’t always veer towards the crème de la crème of children’s publishing. She adores those toy or TV series tie-in books like *Powerpuff Girls* or *Care Bears*. Due to the fleeting popularity and relatively poor story quality of some of these books, I tend not to



buy huge quantities of them for my school library.

At home, it's a different story. However, the teacher-librarian in me still manages to make the most of it. My smart girl and I wrote the publisher of the *My Little Pony* books to point out that the illustrations clashed with the text (Rainbow Dash had Sunny Daze's "cutie mark" for instance – if you have no clue what I am referring to, then you probably do not have a pre-school girl living in your house). I didn't notice the mistakes – she did. I also squeeze in some well-written fare between the fluff pieces, for example, we've just finished an excellent novel called *Starring Prima: The Mouse of the Ballet Jolie*, by Jacquelyn Mitchard.

Using my role as a parent

Mary entered kindergarten this September, in another school board. Her school is staffed by a library technician, but for only one day a week as the position covers five schools. The teacher-librarian in me wants to march in, research in hand, asking tough questions about collection management and program delivery. The mother in me wants to ensure my daughter is not labelled as "the child with the obnoxious parent" and so I want to be as positive and supportive as possible. I've chatted with friends of mine who teach in that board, and they have advised me that change will take time but might be facilitated more quickly through my role as a parent than my role as a teacher-librarian. In this case, advocacy is no longer perceived as self-interested concern for teacher-librarians, but as concern for my child and her education. I'm now the vice-chair of the School Council at Mary's school, a council which recently voted in favour of spending a recent influx of funding on improvements to the layout of the school library. So, my role as a mother has affected how I advocate for school libraries.

Working with pre-school programs

Peter has entered pre-school for the first time and is attending the program two days a week. This YMCA preschool program is located in the school and has an agreement which allows the pre-school students to borrow books each week and so become familiar with the school library. I liked this idea

so much that I borrowed it and began implementing it in my school, however, I've since changed schools and my new school doesn't have a daycare/pre-school program.

These examples help illustrate why I think parenthood has made me a more creative, realistic, and generally better teacher-librarian. I know being a mother has made me take being a teacher-librarian even more seriously. Mary has said things to me that have helped me understand how children view teacher-librarians and I am more determined than ever not to disappoint either my children or my students. Her most challenging statement? "Mom, you're a teacher-librarian. That means you know things." ■



Author Visits, a

Motivation is the key to developing lifelong readers, as every informed educator knows, and an author visit can be a driving motivational element in the hands of a passionate and dedicated educational team. An author visit is potentially one of the most effective means of encouraging children to read for pleasure, for a deeper experience, and, perhaps, habitually as lifelong readers.

Playing the game

Learning to read for pleasure is a talent based on the development of skills and so can be compared to the development of other lifelong habits that bring pleasure to people's lives. It is what I call "playing the game".

Consider for a moment the steps in learning to play basketball. A beginner spends a lot of time learning and developing each skill of the game: dribbling; passing; performing lay ups; and shooting baskets. These are all essential skills for anyone intent on becoming a proficient basketball player. But, if the experience stops with the learning of skills, then where is the pleasure of the game?

The learner must put all the skills together and actually play the game. Only then do young players learn to love the sport, and then go on to enjoy the game from many angles; as players, as spectators, and perhaps as coaches. Young players also learn from watching and turn their favourite players into heroes.

Similar things can happen when children learn to read. We who teach, know the slow and steady process of reading skills development; the hours, the terms, the years that it takes to develop the skills for decoding, comprehending, and responding, to name a few. It is often not fun for the teacher or the students and there is great danger that the joy of it all can be squelched. Not fun – until you put it all together and play the game. When we play the game, literacy happens. And that is where the author visit comes in.

Orchestrate the visit

Any old author visit will not necessarily make a child a better reader. If, for example, an author just 'happens by', the effect is minimal. But an author visit that is planned and orchestrated by a creative, insightful group of educators can be the one event that can change the reading life of a child for years to come. I have been there and I have seen it happen.

An author visit can create a community of readers. The leaders in such a community are the educators – teacher-librarians and teachers – and the authors, whose passion for language and literacy can move mountains. I have experienced nothing else in my career with the same power to develop a literate community.

The teacher-librarian must play a central role in this game. It takes a person who is a children's literature professional and advocate, and an individual skilled in the art of collaborative planning and teaching to get the ball rolling. The teacher-librarian plants the seeds of the literacy community, nurtures the literacy, meets the parents, cajoles the administrators, welcomes the author, and models literate behaviour to create it anew.

The role of curriculum

An author visit can incorporate many areas of curriculum. Teacher-librarians, whose responsibilities often include pre-time coverage, can link to the language arts curriculum with the activity that would evolve from the planning of an author visit. Many of the benchmarks in the language curriculum, as well as in art and drama, are easily covered in students' responses to the author's work. Other curriculum areas can also be incorporated into the activities leading up to and following an author visit. In fact, choices of authors may be made based on curriculum ties, as many of the books of fine Canadian authors connect to Canadian history, race and culture, and experience. Such choices serve

Kathleen Turkington

Motivating Force

the double purpose of enhancing both the reading and curriculum experience.

Every step in the process is important, as careful planning will almost always guarantee a successful ending. In my experience, it was always the teacher-librarian who acted as the coordinator. Steps to a successful author visit include getting administrative support and funding; assembling the teaching team and the classes involved; choosing the author and the books; booking and communicating with the author; assembling an ample supply of the books and other materials needed; staff planning; planning the actual visit; planning the "Event"; follow-up and evaluation.

Include the elements of language

What will benefit the students even more is the professional planning of teachers to include as many elements of language as can be accommodated. This gives the students many opportunities to try out their literacy skills, in other words, to play the game. Students work hard, as do their teachers, but motivation will come from the opportunity to share their literary experiences with the visiting author. This is an important aspect of any author visit, as it not only allows the students to become involved in the work of the author, but also allows the author to engage the students in a common experience. It validates both the importance of the students' part as players in the whole process and the star status of the author.

An author visit can be an event involving one class, one grade level, or one division. In my experience, anything more than this involves too many people at



too many levels. Quality suffers for the sake of quantity.

The proof of the pudding

I would like to end by sharing the story of one student. Michael, a bright, affable underachieving student, was in a grade four class that was to be involved in an author visit to our school. For about two months, the students were involved in reading, reading response, and planning for the author's visit. The day after the visit, Michael's mother came to speak with me.

She said that Michael had come home every day full of enthusiasm about what the class was doing in connection with the author visit. Every night he would report at the dinner table on what they had been doing in school that day. His excitement grew as the day of the author visit came closer.

On the morning of the visit, Michael was too excited to eat breakfast. His mother packed him off to school with a portable breakfast to eat when he was hungry during the morning. Then she waited enthusiastically for him to return after school, so she could hear the details and share the pleasure of his experience. She watched him walk up the path to the house, and was surprised to see his head hanging and face sad.

"So, how was your day, Michael?" she asked, anxious to hear the details.

"It was okay," Michael answered quietly. Then a tear rolled down his face.

"Did something bad happen?" asked his mother.

"No," answered Michael.

"Then what has upset you?"

Michael looked up at his mother, another tear rolling down his cheek, and replied softly, "I'm sad because it's over."

How many times in our careers do we have the opportunity to influence a child so profoundly?

This one is in my memory book! ■

Editor's note: If you are registered for any of the reading programs, then check out the program's web site for information about author visits.

Terrific Connections with Authors, Illustrators, and Storytellers. Toni Buzzeeo and Jane Kurtz. Libraries Unlimited, 1999. 1-56308-744-8. \$38.92

Available from the OLASore.

Author Visits

Dear Teacher-Librarians,



Marsha Skrypuch

My name is Marsha Skrypuch. As the author of several picture books and young adult novels I have the opportunity to make many author visits to schools. I know teacher-librarians are often instrumental in arranging these visits, so I'd like to make some suggestions for hosting successful author visits and share some of my experiences as a visiting author.

Tips for a successful author visit

Contact potential authors/illustrators well in advance of the proposed reading date. For a list of potential presenters, check out www.canscaip.org, www.writersunion.ca, and www.poets.ca. When contacting a presenter, find out exactly how much the visit will cost. A reading fee, travel expense, meals and GST should all be factored in. To reduce costs, see if other schools in your area would like to book the same author for readings. That way you can share travel expenses.

Consider taking advantage of the various national and provincial funding programs. Go here to find out more:

www.writersunion.ca/inviteawriter.html
www.poets.ca/linktext/programs.htm

Factor in autographing time. Many presenters can bring copies of their own books for sale and autograph if requested. Find out the presenter's needs. A bottle of water? A bathroom break between sessions? Lunch? A microphone? A table or chair? Maximum number of students per session?

Give the presenter the exact address of the reading and a map. Include emergency contact phone numbers in case the presenter runs into bad weather or gets lost.

from the Author's Point-of-View

Three days in the life of a visiting author

Last year, I did a grand total of 75 presentations. The highlight was in April when I did a whirlwind three days in northern Ontario.

I flew into Dryden on a 14-seater airplane on Monday night. On Tuesday morning I drove my rental car to Vermilion Bay and did five back-to-back presentations at Lillian Berg public school. Lillian Berg has only 72 students, so half of the students from Eagle River school were bussed in to participate (about 25 children). I did a storytelling session with JK-2, a writing workshop with the grade 3/4s, storytelling with the 3/4s, readings/presentations with the 5/6s and 7/8s. They even adjusted recess so that I could fit in more time with the children.

This was a dream school. Even the youngest students were passionate about books. Neither of these schools had ever had an author visit before, so I felt like a celebrity.

On Wednesday, I drove to a public school that was very different from Lillian Berg. The teachers were fantastic, and the students were friendly and polite, but the library technician told me that half of their 82 students were foster children. These children got intensive and loving care from their teachers and the library technician and this was very apparent. There was a huge range of abilities and the staff was expert in modifying for the variety of needs. It was something to watch.

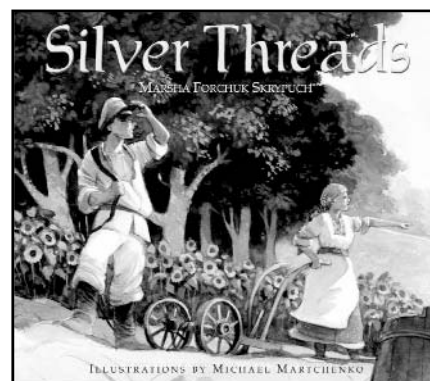
The principal was keen for me to do writing workshops in addition to presentations. The morning was for the little ones, and the afternoon was for grades 5-8. Initially, the principal had thought that the Ks would not get

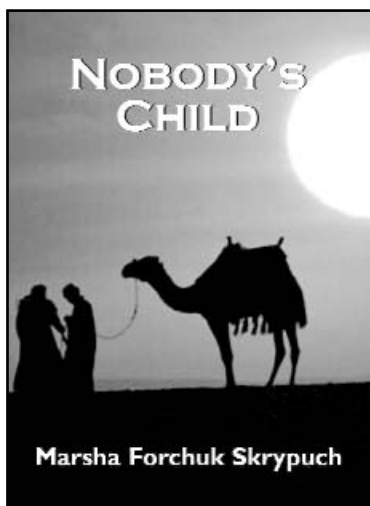
to sit in on any of the presentations because her students are not able to sit long, but I told her I would try to work them in somehow.

I did a quick presentation with the more capable students from grades 1 to 4. I told them about my own struggles with reading when I was young, and then started them on their writing workshop. Their skill level was, on average, much lower than most students their age. Instead of writing with gusto, most wrote only a few sentences. Some could not write at all, so I asked them to draw pictures of their story.

There were several students with huge potential. We were finished early, so I asked one of the teachers to gather the kindergarten students and the struggling 1-4s. Once all 50 of these students were in the library, I did a storytelling session with my picture book, *Silver Threads*. I was thrilled to see that even the youngest students paid attention. When I was finished, a little girl put up her hand. "That was magical," she said.

In the afternoon, I had about 30 grades 5-8 students. As soon as everyone settled in, one boy shouted, "I hate books and I hate reading." I asked how many others felt the same way and half a dozen hands went up. When I asked them why, they said because books were boring. I used that as a launch into my own reading difficulties and how I used to feel the same way. Then I asked how many people saw pictures in their head when they read, and of course the students who didn't like reading couldn't see pictures. So I asked if they would mind if I read them a scene that had some vomiting in it, and of course it was those six boys who wanted to





hear it most of all. I read the gruesome binge and vomit scene from my YA novel, *The Hunger*, which is a great one for reluctant readers. The class was silent except for groans in all the right places. I closed the novel and asked, "Could you see pictures in your head?" And of course they could, but they wished they hadn't!

They wanted me to read more from *The Hunger*, but instead I read them the bullying scene from Hope's

War – another great one for reluctant readers. Even the mouthy boys were hooked. They wanted me to read on, but I put it down and read the scene from *Nobody's Child* when the children are on the roof of the mosque while the Adana massacres are in progress. Then I launched into the writing workshop, which is a fairly lively exercise and always good for rowdy children.

As I was wrapping up the session, one by one, all of those "I hate books" boys came up to me to tell me that they needed to know where to get one or another of my books because they had to read them. I was thrilled!

The next day, I went to Oxdrift school, which has approximately 68 students. The other half of the students from Eagle River were bussed in and participated in the morning. Virtually every child was working above grade level. During the younger student writing workshop, the stories were of a more sophisticated calibre than the older students at the other school. One thing that I do in my writing workshop is to brainstorm two

characters with the class, and then we decide on an event that makes the two characters meet. The characters at the other school were so very sad: a single alcoholic teen mother with three students and a man who lives in a box. The Oxdrift kids brainstormed a poet from London England and a lumberjack/carpenter from Remoteland Ontario. Some of the Oxdrift students filled three foolscap pages in 20 minutes.

During the lunch hour on Thursday, I drove the 10 kilometres back into Dryden to meet a grade 5 student at Riverview Public School who had been an "honourable mention" in a national writing contest for which I was a judge. I gave her autographed copies of my books and congratulated her on her wonderful talent. Her mother was there, as was the principal and teacher librarian and a local reporter. The story that she had written had been about her and her father watching deer at sunrise. Her father had died of leukemia the same week she'd found out that her story got an honourable mention. Apparently, my coming to meet her lifted her spirits when she needed it the most. I gave her my e-mail address and told her that I would be delighted to correspond with her and also to read any stories she would like to send me. We still swap e-mails regularly.

They had put out a lunch for me but I didn't have time to eat, so I grabbed some goodies and ate on the drive back to Oxdrift. I did two more sessions there and then drove back to Dryden to make a brief appearance at the public library, and then headed straight for the airport. When I got home, I did laundry!

In my experience, author visits can be powerful experiences for everyone involved. Yes, such events require time and effort, and there's a cost involved, but it's worth it to get children excited about reading and writing.

Sincerely,

Proving You're Priceless

the Teacher-Librarian as EQAO Support

Martha Martin

Number of students in a class: 30

Cost of Test Materials: Millions

Value of Teacher-Librarian: Priceless



Teacher-librarians have long known that what we do in our schools each day is vital to the successful education of our students. Until the various school library impact studies came out, however, we had a harder time proving it. When the Colorado Study by Keith Curry Lance was presented, administrators heard irrefutable proof that a qualified teacher-librarian, in a school with an open library, quality resources, and lots of cooperatively-planned, resource-based teaching, could *guarantee* them better results on standardized tests. Imagine! A guarantee of better results on standardized tests!

As Ontario was suddenly in the standardized testing business, it might be expected that this

news would thrust teacher-librarians into the spotlight, especially when test scores became a major focus in the media. Sadly, cuts continued to

library programs and library staffing, administrators continued to borrow from library budgets rather than stock libraries appropriately, assigned prep coverage replaced unscheduled library time, and, in some boards, teacher-librarians were eliminated altogether.

Given these constraints, is there any way teacher-librarians can still offer assistance in the EQAO process? I believe there is, and that by doing so, we can prove we are the literacy leaders and reading experts in our schools, advocate for the staffing and program time that we deserve, and show our classroom colleagues that teacher-librarians are truly priceless.

How can we help?

There are a number of ways teacher-librarians can make themselves invaluable in the EQAO process, and no, I don't mean being asked to supervise the grade 5s in the "5/6 split" while the 6s write the test! As I see it, there are three main areas where a teacher-librarian can assist directly in the EQAO experience:

- a) teaching research skills;
- b) exposing students to quality resources;
- c) partnering with the classroom teacher on literature units.

Teaching research skills

No doubt many of you already partner with classroom teachers for resource-based units that address research skills. Hopefully you are doing so with all grades, and not just the 3s, 6s, and 9s (in anticipation of the grade 10 literacy test). All of the EQAO's reading and writing tests refer to some aspect of the research process in at least one question, and all of them require students to use research skills such as applying and organizing information. Students who have experience with these skills and are used to the terminology will fare better on the tests, without question.

Exposing students to quality resources

The EQAO traditionally uses Canadian children's literature, often of recent

publication, in the tests. Teacher-librarians are on the frontline of Canadian KidLit, and we can make ourselves invaluable simply by carrying the newest and brightest materials in our libraries, and promoting them to student readers and teachers. There is an excellent chance these works will surface again on the tests, and what better way to prepare students ahead of time? In addition, by making the acquisition of these resources a goal of your library program, you will improve your chances of receiving funds for collection development, assuming you encourage administration to see the link between the resources and those enviable test scores.

Those of us who still have some version of scheduled library time with students can be more directly involved. If your library program consists of book exchange or prep coverage periods, offer booktalks on Canadian KidLit and read excerpts to the class. The Forest of Reading program is a great place to start. If you are now an Early Literacy teacher during what was once "library time," use quality Canadian KidLit (both fiction and non-fiction) to teach graphic organizers and the conventions of the two types of literature. Secondary TLs can ensure they have all the best Canadian literature on their shelves, and are offering it to the subject teachers to supplement classroom lessons rather than keeping it for free voluntary reading and English independent study units. These strategies allow us to continue teaching to our strengths while tying that teaching to the improvement of test scores, which administrators will appreciate.

Partnering with the classroom teacher on literature units

I believe teacher-librarians will be most appreciated when partnering with classroom teachers on literature units, because classroom teachers have the most to gain directly through our involvement. These are the teachers held responsible for their students' success, especially when test results are posted in the local media by school and grade. If a TL is offering to plan and evaluate lessons that will help students do better on the tests, no



classroom teacher in grades 3, 6, 9, or 10 will say no.

Much has been written lately about literature circles, and how teacher-librarians can play an integral part in their delivery. In my board, literature circles are a hot topic, and many TLs are partnering with homeroom teachers to share the responding and evaluating, as well as the promotion of the resources. This is a superb way to combine all of the EQAO support techniques I mentioned, as a good TL can add some information studies activities, (graphic organizers, WebQuests, related research projects, etc.) and make the experience a true “EQAO-appealing extravaganza.”

Unfortunately, literature circles are still a bit frightening for some teachers, who erroneously see them as too unstructured. Teacher-librarians need to have a backup plan for teaching literature in partnership with more traditional classroom teachers who prefer a whole-class novel study. While helping teach novel studies is not historically the role of the teacher-librarian, I believe that it can be - and perhaps should be - the role, if indeed TLs are the reading and literacy experts in their schools.

To get started, consider which colleagues will be most willing to accept your offer of help. Choose a colleague you know will appreciate it, and who will be sure to make others, including the principal, aware of your help.

Once you have a commitment, make sure you select a high quality, challenging novel that is attainable (whether in a school board kit, using book club points, by borrowing, or even with an appeal to your parents’ club). If worse comes to worst, perhaps it could be done as a read-aloud (read by the TL, of course), so only one copy would be necessary.

If you still have some time to offer additional support, then examine the past EQAO tests and anchor booklets, to see whether you can adapt some of the formats and activities to the novel you’ve selected. Create some questions for guided reading that mimic test questions, and see if the test rubrics can be used as well. If you offer to help assess and evaluate the students’ work using these rubrics, you’ll be even more appreciated. If possible, try to

weave in some information studies activities that address those EQAO-required research skills (WebQuests are a good place to start).

I recently completed a novel study package for Ken Oppel’s award-winning novel *Airborn*, which follows the EQAO tests in the ways I’ve suggested. It is available online at

www.kennethoppel.ca/pg_b_airborn_novelstudy.htm .

Feel free to use it with *Airborn*, or to adapt it for other novels of your choice. Let us know if you create your own package, so that we can share your good work with other teacher-librarians.

Promoting your pricelessness

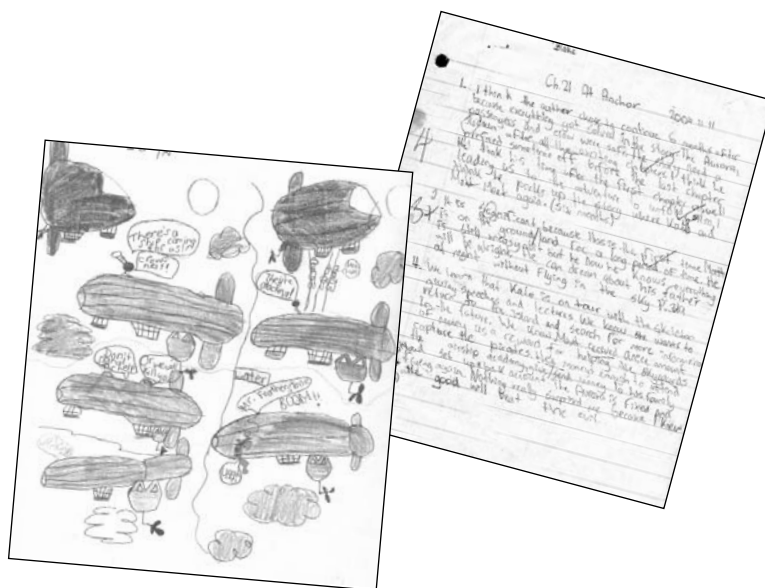
However you decide to help your colleagues, make sure your principal knows what you’ve done. Make sure, too, that your principal knows you would love to do more, if only you had more time – this should practically guarantee an increase in your program time next year. Demonstrate with evidence-based practice that what you do matters and is vital to the success of your students, and that you are, indeed, *priceless*. ■

Resources

School Library
Impact Studies:
www.lrs.org/impact.asp

EQAO
Educator’s
Page:
www.eqao.com/05ede/ed5_1e.aspx?Lang=E

Airborn
Package:
www.kennethoppel.ca/pg_b_airborn_novelstudy.htm



“Students succeed when the library media specialist [teacher-librarian] participates with classroom teachers and administrators in making management decisions that encourage higher levels of achievement by every student,” states Keith Curry Lance in his research brief, *Libraries and Student Achievement*.

When there is collaboration between a teacher-librarian and classroom teachers, the overall achievement of the students is directly affected – and improved. Saint Brigid Elementary School in Hamilton is certainly proof of Lance’s research findings.



Perhaps the best place to begin this story is with my arrival at St. Brigid Elementary School in October, 2000. This was my first placement as a teacher-librarian and, of course, I was very willing to partner with teachers. I soon realized that this group of teachers was very open to anything that I suggested because the principal was very supportive of any initiatives which would benefit the approximately four hundred students of this urban-core school. This was truly a school that was ripe for change. Little did I know that over the next three years I would witness improvements in reading results which demonstrated the worth of our team approach towards programming, assessment, providing resources, and professional development. We found that this team effort was the key which unlocked the potential reader in each one of St. Brigid’s unique children.

My first meeting with the principal was very

productive. I was given permission to edge my way into an intermediate classroom and team teach with the young grade eight teacher. To enhance his language programme, I provided short stories and shared a method of using them. Success was not immediate. The following year, the teacher shared with me the trepidation he had felt during this experience. However, he was fully aware of the benefits of our shared programming and wanted not only to continue, but to expand our collaboration.



Next, I was exposed to Stephen Krashen, the guru of Free Voluntary Reading (FVR), at Super Conference 2001. I went back to the staff filled with enthusiasm and conviction that, I believe, empowered some and frightened others. However, a few teachers began to encourage their students to choose reading material freely and to read daily at pre-determined times. The adage ‘practice makes perfect’ certainly proved valid at Saint Brigid. Children visited the library more often, circulation increased, and teachers noticed that students were reading for longer periods of time.

In September, 2001, a new grade 5/6 teacher agreed to work with me on the short story unit. Once again, a partnership was established that benefited everyone, although the students were the real winners as their teacher and teacher-librarian were working to improve literacy within their classroom.

Classroom teachers and I have used impromptu meetings in hallways and on the playground as well as phone calls to clarify our expectations about the roles each of us would play in the units we were team teaching. Each of us has made significant contributions such as assessing students, gathering resources, and modeling teaching methods. Of course,

Story of Literacy @ Saint Brigid

enhancing literacy was the goal of our collaboration and so, once again, the students were the beneficiaries.

As other teachers witnessed these evolving partnerships, new recruits joined the cause. The new principal had the foresight to make me a member of both the junior and the intermediate teams, which gave me greater scope for collaborative efforts. Collectively, we planned the language programmes for all the grades, implementing book talks – natural outcomes of FVR – as well as other literary adventures such as book writing for specific audiences and literature circles. Again, the students blossomed and their literacy skills soared.

The school library collection had to be updated to keep abreast of the children's ever-expanding desire to obtain new and varied reading material. As FVR took hold in the Junior and Intermediate classrooms, the teachers were able to inform me of the titles, authors and interests that were being discussed and reviewed in their classrooms. This information was invaluable when I purchased new materials for the collection. At different times, various staff members accompanied me on buying trips. In addition to resources for students, these teachers also suggested professional development titles. We've worked together and this combination of my professional judgment and input from staff



and students has resulted in the growth of the collection. Research by Ken Haycock, demonstrates that larger collections lead to higher achievement for students and higher spending on resources lead to increased reading scores. At Saint Brigid, we have been able to support Haycock's findings - improved EQAO scores in 2003/2004 have been one indication of our success.

A wise principal once told me that there are two people who can facilitate change within a school – the principal and the teacher-librarian. And as Keith Curry Lance says, "students succeed when the library media specialist [teacher-librarian] is a consultant to, a colleague with, and a teacher of other teachers." As St. Brigid's teacher-librarian for the past five years, I've seen first-hand how collaboration between a teacher-librarian and classroom teachers, supported by the leadership of capable principals, can produce positive results for everyone involved. Yes, improved EQAO test scores are evidence of our success. More importantly, the students at Saint Brigid now come to the library searching for authors or specific series and can be heard discussing literature with their friends and recommending books to their classmates. During my time at Saint Brigid, it has been my pleasure to be a member of an excellent staff led by two very empowering principals. Working as a team, we were instrumental in providing our students with literacy practices and opportunities that improved their reading skills. ■



Powering Achievement: School Library Media Programs Make a Difference; The Evidence, second edition. Keith Curry-Lance and David V. Loertscher. Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2002. 0-931510-84-8. \$35.64

The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research, second edition. Stephen D. Krashen. Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 1-59159-169-9. \$33.00

Available from the OLASore.



*From Left to Right:
Noah Venkataranagen
Tobias Kwan
Heather Corner
Aly Marcotte
David Navas*

Literacy and the Visual Arts

Irv Osterer

Literacy is a concern for all schools. At Merivale High School, a concerted effort has been made by our entire educational community to foster a culture of literacy and to improve our school's scores on the provincial EQAO tests.

The art department has contributed to the school's literacy campaign in a unique way. The senior graphic design class was asked to create bookmarks featuring literary figures in the act of reading. A copy of the Merivale High School logo and the words "Merivale Library" also had to appear on each bookmark. Students were asked to sketch their ideas and present preliminary drawings in class before proceeding to the computer. Some of the students chose to create their final artwork directly in Photoshop. Others used more traditional pencil crayons, pastels, ink, and designer's gouache to render illustrations which were then scanned, edited and saved as TIFF files. All of the images were then imported to bookmark layouts using Quark

Xpress desktop publishing software, and all the text was added. Final artwork was proofed in black and white on the department's laser printer, then all of the Quark files, scanned images, and fonts were burned to CD and sent to Andrew Dickson at Custom Printers of Renfrew, who generously printed the bookmarks using the company's new five colour press.

The result was a very eclectic set of bookmarks exemplifying the diverse reading patterns that occur in a community school. Some students chose to illustrate figures from novels they had studied in their English courses while others picked characters from children's literature and comic books.

The bookmarks were distributed in the school library at our annual art exhibition in the spring and were very popular with all the visitors to the show. And best of all, Merivale's literacy test scores this year exceeded last year's scores! ■

Delving into Numbers, Looking for Meaning

Diane Bédard

Trying to delve into hard numbers and find meaningful information can be challenging in the field of educational research. It's not that the numbers and information to use in the research are hard to find... indeed, numbers and statistics abound! Check a Ministry of Education or School Board Web site, and you'll find public releases containing all sorts of statistics, including reports to the board, EQAO results, and school planning documents. It's the selection of meaningful comparisons, and the drawing of useful conclusions that can be difficult.

I've had a research question niggling at me since 1999, which was the year that I first tracked the actual implementation and use of the Accelerated Reader (AR) program in our elementary schools. As I saw the dollars being spent on specific title collections and testing software, and I added up the staffing time needed to keep the database up-to-date and run regular reports, I was really curious about the effectiveness of the program. Were we truly getting "bang for the buck?" When I first tried to answer this question five years ago, I quickly realized what I had was just basic knowledge about which schools were/were not using the program, early EQAO test scores, and a collection of anecdotal comments from the schools – lots of numbers but not enough information to make truly meaningful comparisons. While I gave up then, I did not stop collecting the information. Over the ensuing years I've continued to track the local information, such as annual use of the program in each school, the collection sizes invested in, and the EQAO scores at the schools. I've also monitored journals and listservs in an effort to track discussions, articles and reports (mainly American, of course) which explored the application of this program.

With the current programming thrust for building literacy, many different approaches are being discussed and advocated, and, sure enough, the thought of using the AR program as a reading motivation tool surfaced at some of the schools. It was time, I decided...this was the year I finally needed to tackle my growing collection of

data and see what hard results I could document and what meaningful conclusions I could draw.

Some background...

There have been several good reports and anecdotal commentaries published over the past few years, exploring the motivational effect on reading of using the Accelerated Reader program. Worth reading are the Point-Counterpoint pair of commentary articles in *Teacher Librarian* (April 2003, Vol. 30 No.4, p 32-34), and Stephen Krashen's survey report of the current AR research, published in *School Libraries in Canada* (2002, Vol.22, No.2, p 24-26,44).

In the Point-Counterpoint articles, two teacher-librarians explore the pros and cons of the AR program and the perceived impact it has had on their respective school districts where the program was adopted system wide.

Positive comments (by JaKay Greer, Oregon) included:

- ◆ "The student and teacher get immediate, individualized and constructive feedback to direct ongoing reading practice."
- ◆ "The students generally liked the program and were eager to come to the library to get new books...The impact of AR on the library is that library circulation went up at least 25 percent, and at times closer to 75 percent."
- ◆ "I was the professional who decided which books" (to purchase). "Renaissance Learning does a good job of creating tests... for requested books."

Greer also noted that they had decided not to implement the most controversial part of AR – rewarding for accumulated points; "...there would be NO rewards/trinkets given or formal recognition of students for passing the tests". However she also states that all grade levels had decided to report reading scores on the report card. This would seem to me to be a pretty clear reward system!

The Counterpoint side (by Shodra Brisco, Texas) noted the common negative views of the program:

- ◆ "Teachers are requiring students to read within grade level to obtain points".

- ◆ Students were limiting the books they'd choose to "if there's a test for it".
- ◆ "Instead of thoughtful review processes and evaluations", new purchase selection had been reduced to "regardless of the quality of the product, if a book has an AR test, it is certain to find its way onto a school library shelf".
- ◆ Because of the computerized testing which uses only knowledge and comprehension level questions, "most of the serious discussion between the teacher and the student regarding a book's underlying messages, its symbolism, or even character development, come to an end".

Brisco's also wondered about the true learning that was happening with the AR program. "These followers of the program continue to report success in student reading and library circulation statistics without evaluating the possible repercussions... With no evidence of higher-level thinking skills being developed among the readers," she questioned whether students were truly learning the skills to become lifelong readers, given that the only criteria they were learning to use to select pleasure reading books was the tangible points rewarded.

Stephen Krashen's article "Accelerated Reader: Does it work? If so, why?" does an excellent job of reviewing the actual case studies and research reports done on AR, looking for factual proof. Krashen broke down the AR program into the four core components; providing access to books, doing more reading, testing the reading comprehension and rewarding reading. He then searched the current literature for research studies that specifically tested for each of these components to see if the claims about impact on reading were truly supported.

A clear summary of the actual research findings is provided:

1. Providing more access to books results in more reading – proven
2. Increasing recreational reading increases reading achievement – proven
3. Testing children on their reading – no research available
4. Providing rewards – no support

In summarizing his review, Krashen notes:

"There is, thus, clear evidence in favour of the two components of AR: providing access

to books and doing more reading, but nothing in favour of the other two components: tests and rewards".

"Despite the popularity of AR, we must conclude that there is no real evidence supporting it, no real evidence that the additional tests and rewards add anything to the power of simply supplying access to high quality and interesting reading material and providing time for children to read them."

A local look...

When I started the review of the Accelerated Reader program in my board, I was looking for specific signs of its use having any impact on reading levels. Did schools which used AR show significant gains in reading scores when compared to schools which did not use the program?

First, I looked at how to define the schools I would use as my reference AR schools. While a number of schools in my board have flirted with the program, the schools I targeted were all fairly long term adopters of AR. I chose not to include any of the schools that had purchased the program in the last seven years. I also discarded schools if I did not have anecdotal staff reports that of the majority of the junior grades were involved in using the program. This allowed me to narrow my selection to six AR test schools. These six schools maintained a total population of 3,628 students over a three-year period.

Next, I selected three control schools for each of the test schools. I needed schools that were comparable of each to the test schools. Initially this stymied me. I could get good anecdotal comparisons of the schools in our board from several sources. The curriculum consultants were able to suggest groupings of schools that were similar, and a pair of occasional teachers who had taught in all the schools being considered added their comments about the intangible "flavour" of each of the schools. But what I really wanted were clear, measurable control variables that had been identified as having impact on EQAO reading scores, such as socio-economic characteristics of the school area, population stability, and parental education.

I finally found a good resource for this. *Signposts of Success: Interpreting Ontario's Elementary School Test Scores*, was released by the

C.D. Howe Institute in March. Author David Johnson, Professor of Economics at the School of Business and Economics, Wilfrid Laurier University provides a province-wide listing of school performance indicators, sorted by board.

[www.cdhowe.org/english/publications/policy_study_40.html]

Johnson has compiled the statistics for 16 different variables known to impact on EQAO scores and averaged them over two consecutive three-year blocks of time (1998-2001 and 2001-2003). His work makes for some interesting browsing!

Using his charts I was able to check my school groupings for control variables such as parental income, parental education and population stability. Surprisingly, the groupings suggested by the anecdotal comments of the consultants and the “gut feelings” of the occasional teachers were fairly accurate!

There were some variables which impact on a reading program within a school for which I could not establish controls, such as a change in teaching staff or a change in principal leadership. But across the district, all students were using similar reading programs and all teaching staff were receiving similar in-service. I was finally read. I had a group of AR test schools, and a matching group of control schools.

Knowing that a condition of being selected as a test school was the use of the AR program over the junior grades (Grades 4, 5, 6), I collected each school's achievement level on the grade 3 EQAO reading scores (percentage of students meeting or exceeding the provincial average - L3 and L4) from 1998-2000 and the matching grade 6 EQAO reading scores from 2001-2003. My intent was to follow the same groups of students in their growth from grade 3 to grade 6. The collected years of grade 3 results were averaged together to lessen the likelihood of having results skewed by harder/easier test years. The same was done for the grade 6 results.

I compared the averaged grade 3 results at each school to its averaged grade 6 results from 3 years later, looking for the percentage of change in the scores. If the Accelerated Reading program was truly having a longitudinal effect on reading levels, then I would expect to see better percentage increases in the test schools than the control schools.

Findings...

In three of my groupings the AR test schools did show a better percentage change from grade 3 scores to grade 6 scores than did the control schools, but in the other three groupings the control schools exceeded the test schools. Indeed the overall differences in scores favoured the control schools. In terms of hard data, I was unable to find any solid trends that would indicate that a school using the Accelerated Reader program could expect significantly improved reading scores in the long run.

While not a large enough study to be conclusive, my findings seem to echo those of Krashen:

“What we can conclude... is that the enthusiasm for AR is not supported by research.” ■

Actual Data from the Comparison Groupings

	% Change in scores
Test school 1	0%
Control school 1-1	0%
Control school 1-2	14.5%
Control school 1-3	18.5%

The first test school showed 0% change, the control schools averaged 11% change.
Difference of 11% for control schools.

	% Change in scores
Test school 2	4.5%
Control school 2-1	7%
Control school 2-2	16.5%
Control school 2-3	32.5%

The second test school showed 4.5% change, the control schools averaged 18.7% change.
Difference of 14.2% for control schools.

	% Change in scores
Test school 3	16.5%
Control school 3-1	32.5%
Control school 3-2	8.5%
Control school 3-3	14.5%

The third test school showed 16.5% change, the control schools averaged 18.5% change.
Difference of 2% for control schools.

	% Change in scores
Test school 4	31.5%
Control school 4-1	28%
Control school 4-2	18.5%
Control school 4-3	31%

The fourth test school showed 31.5% change, the control schools averaged 25.8% change.
Difference of -5.7% for control schools.

	% Change in scores
Test school 5	14.5%
Control school 5-1	14.5%
Control school 5-2	6.5%
Control school 5-3	18.5%

The fifth test school showed 14.5% change, the control schools averaged 13.2% change.
Difference of -1.3% for control schools.

	% Change in scores
Test school 6	26%
Control school 6-1	18.5%
Control school 6-2	18.5%
Control school 6-3	31%

The sixth test school showed 26% change, the control schools averaged 22.7% change.
Difference of -3.3% for control schools.

Hetty Smeathers

An interview by Karen Smulevitch

TL interviews Hetty Smeathers, teacher-librarian at St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School – York Catholic District School Board. Hetty is an experienced, highly qualified teacher-librarian, innovator, curriculum writer, and presenter.

TL: How did you get involved in school libraries?

HS: My early years were spent in elementary school, teaching in the primary and junior areas. Following five memorable years at home with my family, I returned to teaching on a part-time basis, this time in the gifted program. Cut backs in the program meant another addition to my resume, this time as an ESL teacher. A pivotal moment came when I changed paths once again, this time heading towards secondary school to teach Special Ed and ESL. In 1996, when an extra section opened in our school library (remember those days?), I jumped at the chance. It was the best decision of my teaching career.

TL: For how long have you been involved in school libraries and in what capacity?

HS: I truly love my life in the school library, my favourite 'classroom'. I have called it home for the past seven years. When the previous department head left, I assumed the position with many reservations – how could I fill those shoes? I have been most fortunate to have on my team a library technician extraordinaire. Sharing a love of the printed word, we approach each day as a new adventure, filled with many unique challenges and learning opportunities. Some of these challenges have included a year of cutbacks when our positions were reduced to half time and my teaching assignments included Special Ed and teaching computers – as well as trying to maintain the status quo in the library.

Traditionally, our school population has not been one that reads for pleasure and literacy test results and library circulation numbers were very low. Gradually, I undertook a number of initiatives

to address those needs. They included the addition of new, contemporary novels to our collection with an emphasis on Canadian novels (of course, we gave ourselves a mandate to read as many of these new books as we could); the introduction of the Accelerated Reader program (it is now a compulsory component in all grade 9 & 10 English classes), and some aesthetic changes to our facility to attract both staff and students. I also seized any opportunity to collaborate with staff in both the planning and delivery of lessons (marking included!). After school workshops, reading challenges and contests, and lessons on the research process, presentation skills, and other technology related topics helped to increase our clientele.

TL: What are the outstanding moments for you in your career?

HS: So many moments come to mind; the vast majority of these have occurred during my tenure in the library. Numerous opportunities for personal and professional growth have been given to me in this chapter of my career. I am privileged to be part of a team of outstanding secondary teacher-librarians in our board who have been instrumental in nurturing me on my journey. I credit much of my growth and experience to their mentorship, sharing, and support over the years. It is because of this group of dynamic teachers that I became involved in presenting a number of times at Super Conference. As well, I was honoured to be a member of the writing team for *Interdisciplinary Studies: Introduction to Information Studies* and a contributor to the writing of the profile with a fabulous team from the Toronto District School Board. The instructor for Part II Librarianship was Tim Gauntley, and it was he who introduced us to a draft document, *Information Studies K-12*. The research process has been an integral part of my library curriculum ever since.

As a member of the provincial selection



committee for the White Pine Award Reading Program, I have been introduced to some wonderful Canadian writers. Members of the White Pine book club at St. Joan of Arc include my library technician, two staff members and twenty-five very enthusiastic readers representing all grade levels. Our recent breakfast meeting was a tremendous success. We are all looking forward to the 2nd annual area conference celebrating White Pine that will be held in April in conjunction with our coterminous board.

Administration at all levels of our school board has been very supportive of many of the initiatives that our subject council has introduced. Despite the absence of a library consultant for the past three years, this council has been able to accomplish much to further the development of library programs that benefit all of our students. Other projects that I have been privileged to be part of include helping to develop an ITC (Information Technology Curriculum) for kindergarten to grade 12, the Board level Library Review team, our Library Services Board, and workshops and in-services at both the local and provincial level.

New learning opportunities and projects are never far away! Whether it be developing a PowerPoint presentation for parents of prospective grade 9 students, designing a Web site for our library, collaborating with staff, developing units of study using the Curriculum Unit Planner, helping students to find that elusive secondary source for a major assignment 'due yesterday' or posing for our own personal 'Read' poster, this is the best place to be.

TL: Can you share your dream for school libraries in Ontario?

HS: My vision for school libraries includes:

- ◆ Full-time staffing by a team that includes a qualified teacher-librarian and a trained library technician
- ◆ A level playing field where all users have equal access to a wide range of current resources both print and on-line (the Ontario Digital Library)
- ◆ Collaboratively planned and delivered curriculum implementing *Information*

Studies, K-12

- ◆ Facilities that are equipped with up-to-date technology, including a full range of current software, and on-going training and support for both staff and students

TL: Can you share your favourite books, authors and/or other pastimes?

HS: My love affair with books began in grade school and has continued to grow. I feel so lucky to be able to indulge in this passion and call it homework. My list of favourite reads is lengthy and I am always happy to share these. If I were to find myself on a deserted island for an extended period of time (ah, that sounds like paradise in the middle of a blustery winter) I would take three books: *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry, *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines and *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. The wisdom of these gifted writers and the magical way that they have woven the printed word have inspired me – these are books well worth a second and a third reading. Other passions include reconnecting with nature amidst the peace and solemnity of cottage life, and weaving, a truly therapeutic and rewarding pastime.

TL: What advice would you give to new teacher-librarians?

HS: Read, read, read. Welcome new experiences. Every day, try to do something new and different. Be a learner more than a teacher. The rewards are endless when you look at life from a different perspective. Connect often and network with your counterparts in other libraries. In our board, we are fortunate to be able to communicate via FirstClass. In addition to e-mail, there are 'conference areas' where we share ideas, post information and ready-to-use resources, answer queries and offer support to everyone in library services. Group conferencing is available through an instant messaging feature – a great way to collaborate with colleagues in the far reaches of our board. Become a member of OLA, volunteer, and take advantage of the many professional development workshops that are offered.

"He who has a garden and a library, wants for nothing." - Cicero ■



ESTHER ROSENFELD won OSLA's Award for Special Achievement for her extraordinary advocacy and leadership for school libraries



JANET McNAUGHTON on censorship by librarians in the Reading Programs



Super Conference 2005

Amazing Stories
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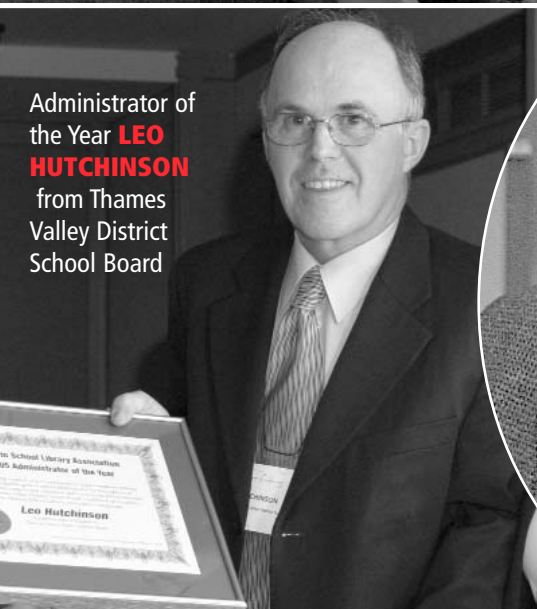
STEPHEN LEWIS held 2200 delegates in thrall as he appealed to conscience for the children of Africa.



OLA President **KEN ROBERTS**
interviewed international technological
guru **CLIFFORD LYNCH**



BARBARA STRIPLING
from New York
City's New
Visions for
Public Schools
Project had
three
outstanding
sessions on
empowering
youth



Administrator of
the Year **LEO
HUTCHINSON**
from Thames
Valley District
School Board



DAVID LOERTSCHER
again shared his
breakthrough knowledge on
student achievement



DIANA MALESZEWSKI
and friend



Administrator of the
Year **WAYNE
HAMILTON**
from Toronto District
School Board with
ROBERTA HENLEY

Super Ideas from Super Conference 2005

Library Ambassador Program

presented by Peggy Thomas

***Twentieth Street School Job Posting:
Help Wanted***

Do you Love to Read?

Openings for Library Ambassadors

Peggy Thomas, the creator of this innovative program, described a library ambassador as someone who goes forth, taking what he or she loves out into the community. This aptly described the five Library Ambassadors who joined teacher-librarians Peggy Thomas and Sybille Parry at an OLA Super Conference session. Michael Chamberlain, Paul Kessel, Elizabeth Stratton, and Katie Warriner, of Kew Beach Public School, along with Jasmine Zawawi of James S. Bell Public School, shared their formal letters of application with the audience. They also shared what they liked about being Library Ambassadors.

Library Ambassador programs can begin as



small initiatives and be tailored to the needs of the school. They can involve book talks, circulation duties, training other students to use the IPAC, library announcements, shelving, selection of resources, responsibilities, and advertising. Students develop leadership skills, public speaking skills, and life skills such as letter writing, problem solving, and math skills associated with purchasing resources. Library ambassadors have special privileges including extra borrowing privileges, first chance to read and review new books, team lunches, or a visit to the book vendors with the task of selecting 1-2 new resources.

For more information, contact:

Peggy Thomas peggy.thomas@tdsb.on.ca

Sybilie Parry: sybilie.parry@tel.tdsb.on.ca ■

- Kathy MacDonald

Sharing Success Stories: From Advocacy to Action Via Evidence-Based Practice

*presented by Sandi Zwaan, Deborah
Braithwaite, and Diana Maleszewski*

This was indeed a timely session, following so soon after the Ross Todd workshop on Evidence-Based Practice and Student Achievement. Much of the buzz in the Ontario school library world revolves around evidence-based practice. Not only is the OSLA council working on providing a 'toolkit' of materials and strategies for teacher-librarians, the Ontario Library Association has agreed to fund \$100,000 for an Ontario Research Study. Because advocacy requires evidence, we are now taking an evidence-based approach to advocacy.

Our three presenters provided us with cutting edge strategies for documenting and sharing our success stories and methods to gather hard evidence that can be used with administrators and school community to prove that our school library programs improve student literacy. Sandi began the session with an introduction to evidence-based practice. Many will recognize Sandi as a leader in school librarianship and will have put into practice the Information Power Pack series that she has written with Carol Koechlin. Recently, they co-

authored a book with Dr. David Loertscher entitled *Ban Those Bird Units*. Deborah demonstrated the impressive job she has done of gathering and graphing data which shows, among other things, the direct correlation between the number of books signed out by a student and that student's achievement. This is the hard data that we need. Diana then shared several methods of gathering evidence, including developing personal portfolios, sending home regular newsletters from the school library and displaying student work that shows evidence of deep understanding and making connections. She illustrated that, when gathering evidence, we should ask ourselves what the evidence tells us, what we will do with it, and what issues and concerns to consider when collecting. This session was very helpful. Many of us can now get started collecting real quantitative and qualitative evidence. ■

- Roberta Henley

Battle of the Books

*Presented by Marg Esaw, Sharon Guz, and
Jeanne Buckley, Teacher-Librarians, York
Catholic District School Board*

Quick – what's a tried and true reading motivation program with a history dating back to a radio station in Chicago during the 1930s? Stumped? Welcome to Battle of the Books.

Battle of the Books has evolved into a widely used program to motivate and reward readers in grades 4, 5, and 6. It has also been used in grades 7 and 8. And I suspect Battle of the Books is about to make its high school debut – there were at least three high school teacher-librarians in the audience and at least two of them plan to try the program.

Essentially, Battle of the Books involves teams of students reading as many books as possible from a predetermined list and then, on competition day, identifying authors, titles, and



For most sessions, presentation materials are available on the Super Conference 2005 Web site at www.accessola.com/superconference2005

characters based on clues which are worth points. The team with the most points wins the competition. The competition can be held at the local, board, or district level. Typically, planning begins in January, the kick-off is in February, students read through April and the competition (which usually involves several rounds) is in April/May. While this program does take considerable planning, resources are available both in print and online and the results are well worth the time and effort.

Looking for a new way to get your students excited about reading? Consider Battle of the Books. ■

- Brenda Dillon

Have ideas for a Super Conference 2006 session?

Submit a session proposal online at www.accessola.com.

Give 'em the gears! (Secondary)

presented by Sharon Armstrong, Head of Library, Waterford DHS, Chair, GEDSB Library Subject Council; Roberta Henley, Head of Library, Brantford Collegiate, 2004 OSLA President; Val Bureau, Courtland Public School; Rick MacDonald, Teacher-Librarian, Thompson Creek Elementary School; Grand Erie DSB

Congratulations to the Grand Erie team who have created the first GEARS -Grand Erie Assisted Research Strategies- for Intermediate-Senior students. The primary and junior -

intermediate guide will be completed soon. This student-friendly guide, which extends the gear metaphor along with other car analogies such as “smooth driving” and “pit stops”, is comprehensive and provides a new look at many common research strategies. This resource is organized around OSLA's four stages of research. In stage one, the familiar KWL chart is accompanied by a web with

specific guiding words to help students broaden and narrow topics. In stage four, there are specific ideas for students doing presentations and other final products. These books are a must for teacher-librarians. ■

- Jo-Anne LaForty



Reading and the New Literacies

presented by Elizabeth Lee, Faculty of Education, Queen's University; Dr. Marlene Asselin, University of British Columbia.

Dr. Lee spoke about the new literacy challenges students face when reading with Information and Communications Technologies, especially when dealing with on-line information and she highlighted the central role of the teacher-librarian in teaching many of these skills to students.

“Seductive details” – information chunks, hyperlinks, and images - distract students from their research. It will be no surprise to teacher-librarians that it is the “old literacies” that prepare students for the “new literacies”. Dr. Lee means that teachers, and teacher-librarians, must provide scaffolding to help students develop their print literacy skills and then transfer these skills to materials presented electronically. Students need guided questions to focus their research and need good note-taking skills to help them encode into memory the new information garnered from their research. Students also need to be taught how to read visual information by noting labels and text that accompany the visuals, by recognizing enhanced rather than accurate images (which is common on the Internet), and then by explaining the visuals orally and in written form to ensure full comprehension. Given teacher-librarians' expertise in literature, reading, information literacy, and information and communications technology, it's obvious that teacher-librarians can play an important role in this shift from old to new literacies. ■

- Jo-Anne LaForty



ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING AT SUPER CONFERENCE 2005

Annual Report

OSLA President 2004: Roberta Henley

Last year was, once again, very busy and exciting for us. This report highlights most of our activities.

Advocacy

Advocacy continues to be of utmost importance for teacher-librarians across Ontario. Letters were written by OSLA President Roberta Henley to her local MPP Dave Levac, and forwarded to Minister Kennedy, asking for a new provincial document for school libraries and a change in the funding formula, two crucial steps needed to repair the crisis in school libraries, and to the task force for *Think Literacy: Cross Curricular Approaches Grades 7-12* and *Think Literacy Success: The Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario* which was copied to the Minister, demonstrating the exclusion of school libraries in the documents.

Councillor Susan Moroz wrote Premier McGuinty about the funding of school libraries and this was shared with Minister Kennedy. As well, Vice-President Anita Brooks Kirkland wrote to Minister Kennedy, asking him to investigate the Ministry's lack of participation in the Ontario Digital Library Project. Roberta sent an e-mail to O.P.E.N. directly after a meeting with Minister Kennedy at the Curriculum Forum, outlining the potential of teacher-librarians and the school library program in literacy intervention strategies, and then followed up with another letter, outlining the extensive correspondence from executive members of the OSLA to the Minister, and once again requesting a meeting.

Correspondence from the Minister's office was, for the most part,

impersonal; however, we were told that Minister Kennedy would attend a school event in support of National School Library Day. This, unfortunately, did not happen.

Vice-President Anita Brooks Kirkland attended the Government of Ontario Budget Town Hall meeting to express our concern about both school library funding and the Ontario Digital Library. Roberta met with Dave Levac, pointing out the big disconnect between the government's literacy initiatives and the role of the school library program, the problems with the funding formula and the lack of our own document, and also managed to meet with Minister Kennedy for 10 minutes about these concerns. These meetings were followed up with letters from Dave Levac and Roberta, requesting a formal meeting with OSLA.

Roberta attended the CLA/BCLA Conference in June, 2003 and gave a report about the state of school libraries in Ontario.

A survey was distributed to school boards in Ontario, asking for detailed staffing information. Data from returned surveys was compiled into chart form for use by members, the Ontario Coalition for School Libraries, and other advocacy groups. Many boards have not yet provided information.

Ontario Research Study

After the Evidence-Based Practice

session that many of us attended with Dr. Ross Todd of Rutgers University, OSLA Council decided to make evidence-based practice a focus of our strategic plan. To accomplish this, we have immediate plans to develop a toolkit of materials for teacher-librarians across Ontario and have applied to OSSTF for a subject association grant of \$2500 for support. A sub-committee to begin this work will be formed at our next council meeting. Another outcome of the Ross Todd session resulted in our biggest accomplishment, which came when a motion was passed by the Ontario Library Association Board of Directors meeting to provide funding of up to \$100,000 for an Ontario Research Study similar to those completed by Dr. Ross Todd and/or Keith Curry Lance. Educators and parents have been alarmed by a significant decline in achievement levels of our students. The relationship between the School Library Program and student achievement has been an issue much discussed in the media over the last few years. As well, both the Canadian and Ontario Coalitions for School Libraries have talked about the need for a study to show that there is a real connection between school libraries and student achievement. Although research skills and higher-level thinking skills are increasingly in demand at the post secondary level and in the world of work in this information age, the

“... our biggest accomplishment came when a motion was passed b
funding of up to \$100,000 for an Ontario [School Library] Research

connection between a solid school library program and the acquisition of these skills has been overlooked.

Our attempts at advocacy with the Ministry have had disappointing results; the lack of Canadian and/or local research is often cited as one of the barriers. Advocacy without local research and school-level evidence has limited effectiveness. While recent Ontario Ministry of Education publications have acknowledged the importance of the school library (i.e., *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario*), funding for school library programs is inconsistent across the province, and is in general decline. An Ontario study is crucial to gather the evidence of the importance of school libraries and school library programs. This is a unique opportunity in Ontario to move libraries forward as a group.

The Ontario Study we have planned, in partnership with others, (possibly People For Education, EQAO, OISE, and university faculties) will create and implement a research study in which evidence-based research methodology is used to assess the benefit of school library programs and their impact on student achievement. The study will be done in large part by a Canadian researcher, which will in turn provide access to Canadian research funds, and to the creation of acknowledged Canadian experts on school libraries. The business plan for the study is well underway.

OSLA division review and strategic plan

As part of the ongoing attempt to meet the needs of its members, OSLA began a review process. A small group of past and upcoming presidents of the association met to discuss the needs of our members. Results of the review helped us formulate our strategic plan for next year. Of particular importance is the need for OSLA to take the initiative in the development of a plan to support our teacher-librarians in evidence-based practice. Other goals include updating our mission statement, forming an editorial board

to oversee Web site maintenance and revision, providing ongoing listserv discussions (facilitated by Councillor Jim Neill), and posting a feature article from *The Teaching Librarian* on our OSLA Web site.

Ontario Coalition for School Libraries

OSLA is represented on the Ontario Coalition for School Libraries, an advocacy group consisting of Canadian publishers, authors, parents, and other supporters of school libraries and co-chaired by Tundra Books' Catherine Mitchell and OLA Past President Liz Kerr. The OCSL recently posted its mission statement, vision and goals on its Web site at

www.ontarioschoollibraries.ca.

As well, the group is circulating a promotional full-colour card for the public and for administrators, which urges them to rate their school libraries. Liz continues to work tirelessly on behalf of OSLA and we thank her!

National School Library Day

National School Library Day was first announced by Roch Carrier, National Librarian of Canada, at the National School Library Summit in Ottawa in June, 2003. This year it was held on October 25, and the theme was Linking Libraries, Literacy and Learning. Members across the province joined colleagues across Canada and organized a wide range of activities designed to celebrate and heighten awareness of the school library program. Many held author visits, created displays, held board-wide reading days, or organized other events that were showcased by their local media.

Word on the Street

OSLA was represented at the Canadian Coalition for School Libraries booth at Word on the Street in Toronto last summer, helping to advocate on behalf of our school libraries.

Initiatives

Think Literacy: Cross-Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12

Think Literacy was written in 2003 by a writing team commissioned by the Expert Panel on Students at Risk to support teachers with approaches to teaching reading, writing and communications. Last summer, OSLA's Carol Koechlin, along with Rose Dodgson, Diana Knight, and reviewer Esther Rosenfeld, wrote additional examples of instructional approaches designed for teacher-librarians working with students. Contents include Reading Strategies: Getting Ready to Read, Modeling Independent Reading and Reading Different Text Forms, and Oral Communication: Small-group Discussions. This has now been posted to our OSLA Web site and made available to other contributing subject associations. Many thanks to Carol and team.

Super Conference

Carol Koechlin, Diana Knight and Michael Rosettis, the OSLA Conference organizers of 2005's Super Conference, did an out-standing job of making the conference, once again, a most rewarding event for those in our profession.

OSLA and CASL

The Canadian School Library Association (CSLA) and the Association of Teacher-librarians of Canada (ATLC) merged to form a new association, the Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL). OSLA looks forward to working in partnership with CASL. Marlene Turkington, from Thames Valley, has taken on the role of president of CASL for the upcoming year. Marlene will work closely with OSLA members to advocate for school libraries.

Ontario Digital Library

The vision of the Ontario Digital Library is a partnership of Ontario's libraries which will provide seamless services and resources to all the citizens of Ontario - a digital network of information resources and services that

y the Ontario Library Association Board of Directors to provide Study similar to those completed by Dr. Ross Todd . . .

will enable access to high quality information resources and services. Progress on the project included communication with stakeholders, a survey posted on the OLA Web site, and the formation of a business plan. The response from the library community has been very positive. In fact, the Minister of Culture has announced \$700,000 and a commitment to champion the ODL to her ministerial colleagues. Congratulations to the Ontario Digital Library! OSLA has been a part of the team, with representation from Anita Brooks Kirkland and Esther Rosenfeld.

OSAPAC Survey

Each year, the Ministry of Education provides provincial software licensing for all publicly-funded schools in Ontario. Online subscription reference databases are an essential part of our collections; however, some schools cannot provide this resource because of cost. OSLA has asked members to assist in advocating for an on-line reference database by completing the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee survey at www.osapac.org. A flyer designed by Anita Brooks Kirkland was distributed at several workshops at Super Conference.

Forest of Reading

Teacher-librarians across Ontario continue to impassion their students to read by registering them in the OLA's 'Forest of Reading' programs. The 'forest' includes, from primary up to adult: Blue Spruce, Silver Birch, Red Maple, White Pine, Golden Oak, and Evergreen. OSLA's senior high school program is still being offered as a pilot in some schools. Teacher-librarians continue to share ideas and strategies for the implementation of the various levels of the reading programs on our OSLA listserv and to celebrate student involvement at organized events across Ontario. We certainly appreciate the participation of our wonderful colleagues and students.

Awards/nominations

At our School Library Awards Presentation and Reception, we once again recognized individuals for their exemplary teacher-librarianship, leadership, and commitment. We applaud these award winners for their outstanding contribution to moving school libraries forward. Thanks to Anita Brooks Kirkland for ensuring a smooth reception. Membership continues to be solid as teacher-librarians take advantage of the block membership and pro-rated fee structure.

Professional development

The Education Institute offered **Connecting School Library Programs to Student Achievement**, a two-day workshop for school library leaders on November 18 and 19. The focus was on how to develop an action plan for collecting evidence of the value of school library programs currently being offered in Ontario schools. The second part of this workshop was held here at Super Conference on February 2 with Dr. David Loertscher, during which participants learned more about strategies to assist them with forming action plans for moving forward with Evidence-based Practice.

Throughout the year, the OLA's Education Institute offered timely and stimulating online and conference call workshops for teacher-librarians, including programs related to blogs and blogging, selecting graphic novels, the research process, searching on the Web, boys and reading, and essay writing.

Ontario Library Association

As members of OSLA we are in a unique position in that we are a Subject Association and also a division of the OLA. Through our affiliation with the OLA we have input into and benefit from the Education Institutes, the Reading Programs, the OLA Store, and much more. We also receive a wealth of expertise and incredible support from Executive Director Larry Moore and the entire OLA staff. Congratulations to Larry on his 20 years with the OLA! On

Wednesday, at the OLA AGM, a resolution was passed honouring Larry for his exceptional leadership and commitment to libraries. An endowed award has been established in his name.

Looking Ahead

We have a very exciting year coming up, as we look forward to the Ontario Research Study. Advocacy needs evidence! A business plan has recently been formulated which will now move the process forward. At the same time, OSLA Council has plans to promote evidence-based practice. We will soon be producing a toolkit of materials and strategies to assist teacher-librarians across the province in gathering evidence of the differences we make to students. To assist us, we have submitted an application to OSSTF for funding in addition to what we have allotted in our budget. We will also continue to advocate strongly for a meeting with the Minister of Education. The energy does seem to be building. The development of research skills features prominently in many Ministry Curriculum Documents. *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert panel on Literacy* in grades 4 to 6 has several references to teacher-librarians and the school library. The Ministry's recent publication on boys and reading, *Me Read? No Way!* also refers to the school library. Advocacy groups such as People for Education and the Ontario and Canadian Coalitions for School Libraries continue to effect positive change for school library programs.

Councillors

Many thanks to OSLA Councillors for their continued dedication and spirit. Our association greatly benefits from these hard-working representatives. Welcome to Sharon Armstrong who has recently accepted the position of councillor for Central West, and to Petra Smith, who is our new treasurer/secretary. Also, congratulations to Michael Rosettis who has taken on the role of Vice-President and to Anita Brooks-Kirkland, who is our 2005 President of OSLA. ■

CATHY JONES

from
This Hour
Has 22
Minutes

**TIM
GAUNTLEY**

focused on
action in four
sessions

BRODART SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Helping librarians attend one of
the library world's greatest events

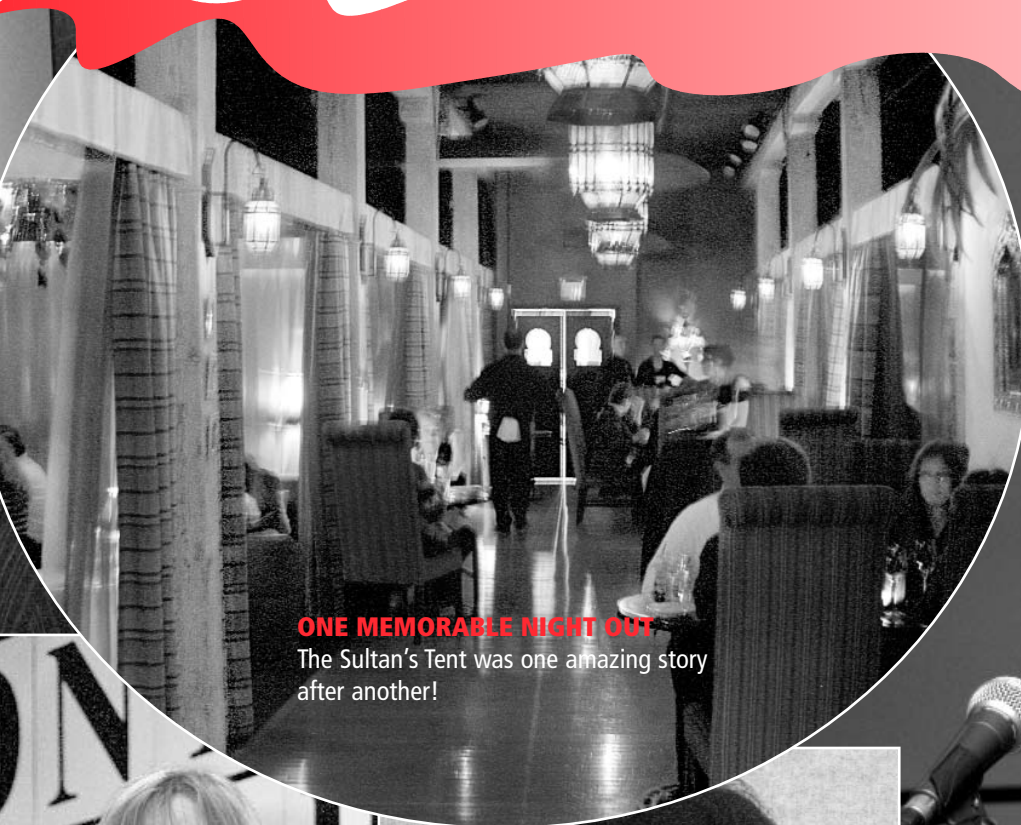
JUDITH GORRY

from Halton on graphic novels

PAN PANOPALIS on promoting male literacy

OSLA's
Librarian of
the Year
**CHRISTINE
HOUSE** from
Loyola
Catholic
Secondary
School in
Mississauga

DIANA KNIGHT at risk!



ONE MEMORABLE NIGHT OUT

The Sultan's Tent was one amazing story after another!

ROBERT J. SAWYER

possibly Canada's most honoured author was one of fifty authors



NORAH MCCLINTOCK

winner of the Red Maple Award 2004

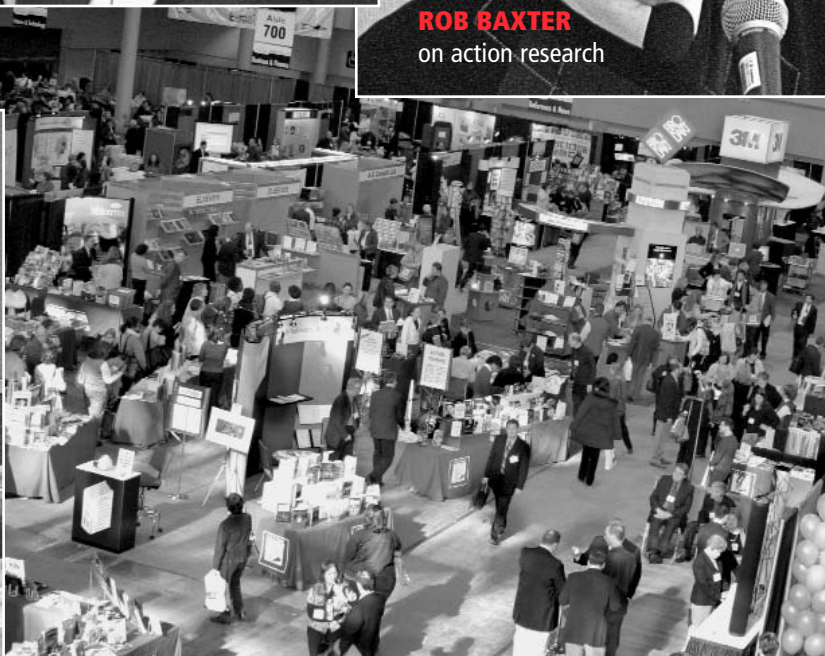


ROB BAXTER

on action research



ROBERTA HENLEY and ANITA BROOKS KIRKLAND with fellow OLA Directors at the OLA AGM



Welcome to the debut of Book Buzz @ your library, a new column devoted to showcasing the best of the best books, across the grades and across the curriculum. These are the titles to put at the top of your shopping list if you don't already have them! Publication information is included for each book, as are sample curriculum links, a summary, and some suggestions for how the book can be used.

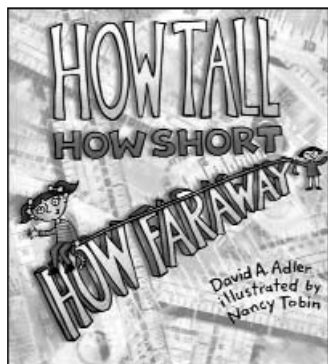
And now, on to the first Book Buzz @ your library...

How Tall How Short How Far Away

David A. Adler. Illustrated by Nancy Tobin. 1999. 0-8234-1375-6

Sample Curriculum Links:

- * Primary/Junior Math: Measurement
- * Grade 5 Social Studies: Ancient Civilizations



Summary:

This book teaches the reader how people have been measuring things for thousands of years. Topics include measurement in ancient Egypt and Rome, why measuring sticks were created, and the Imperial and metric systems.

How to Use This Book:

This book is an excellent way to demonstrate the necessity of standard units of measure in an interactive way. As a bonus, it's cross-curricular, because it includes information that can be used in the Grade 5 ancient civilizations unit.

Diary of a Worm

Doreen Cronin. Illustrated by Harry Bliss. 2003. 0-439-67774-2

Sample Curriculum Links:

- * Grade 3 Science: Soils
- * Junior Language Arts: Writing



Summary:

This book is a humorous rendition of a young earthworm's supposed diary from March 20 to August 1. The illustrations are hilarious, and even older students enjoy it.

How to Use This Book:

This book can be used for a variety of purposes. It is an excellent example of voice and character, a model for journal writing, and a good demonstration of how to use speech bubbles. It is also a

fun teacher read for the Grade 3's soil unit. Students LOVE it.

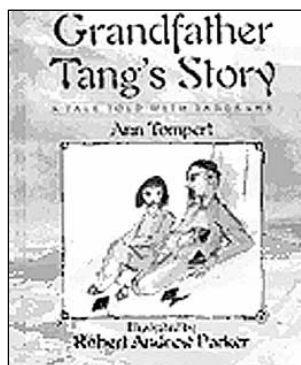
Other "must haves" by this author are *Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type*, *Giggle Giggle Quack* and *Vote for Duck* (great for the grade 5 government unit).

Grandfather Tang's Story: A Tale Told With Tangrams

Ann Tompert. Illustrated by Robert Andrew Parker. 1990. 0-517-5487-x

Sample Curriculum Links:

- * Primary-Junior Math: Geometry



Summary:

Grandfather Tang and Little Soo are making tangram puzzles. They decide to tell a story about the fox fairies using tangrams. The story Grandfather Tang recreates is one about Chou and Wu Ling. These two fox fairies are best friends who like to compete, until one tragic moment when their friendship is tested.

How to Use This Book:

This book is a wonderful way to introduce tangrams. While the book is being read, the students can be challenged to recreate the tangram puzzles. Later students can use diagrams to replicate other

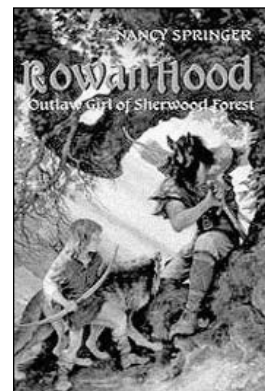
tangram puzzles, or they can create their own.

Rowan Hood: Outlaw Girl of Sherwood Forest

Nancy Springer. 2001. 0-439-38774-4

Sample Curriculum Links:

- * Grade 4 Social Studies: Medieval Times
- * Grade 4 Language Arts: Reading



Summary:

A young girl named Rowan finds herself forced to live alone in Sherwood Forest. As a result, Rowan sets out to find her father, Robin Hood. While on her adventure, Rowan is forced to pretend to be a boy. Will her father accept her if she finds him, and how will he react when he discovers she is not a boy?

How to Use This Book:

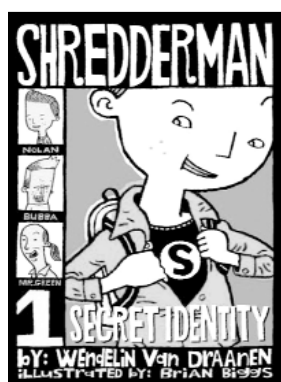
This book lends itself nicely to discussion and literature circles. It presents many opportunities for discussing the role of women in medieval society. It can easily be used as a comparison to *Robin Hood* or as part of a Robin Hood unit. Check out the sequel, *Outlaw Princess of Sherwood: A Tale of Rowan Hood*.

Shredderman 1: Secret Identity

Wendelin Van Draanen.
Illustrated by Brian Biggs.
2004. 0-375-82351-4
www.shredderman.com

Sample Curriculum Links:

- * Grade 3-6 Language Arts: Reading
- * Grade 6 Health and Guidance



Summary:

Inspired by an incidental comment from his teacher, Nolan Byrd decides to use his computer talents to get back at the class bully, Bubba. Imagining himself as the superhero "Shredderman," Nolan begins to spy on Bubba in order to show the world what he's really like. When he gets enough evidence, he creates "shredderman.com," a website that showcases Bubba's unjust acts. This makes Nolan a hero, but even superheroes get into trouble. Will Nolan's secret identity be discovered? Will he be able to stop the terrible Bubba Bixby before it is too late?

How to Use This Book:

This is a great reluctant reader story, and boys and girls both love it. It provokes a lot of conversation and lends itself nicely to literature

circles and read-alouds. While responding, reflecting, and discussing the novel contents, students volunteer lots of personal opinions and experiences. It is easy to get the students to predict what Nolan or Bubba will do next. Shredderman can easily be used to integrate technology as well, because students can actually visit www.shredderman.com.

Milkweed

Jerry Spinelli. 2005.
0-440-42005-9

Sample Curriculum Links:

- * Intermediate Language Arts: Reading
- * Grade 9 English: Literature Studies and Reading



Summary:

This is a story of a young boy who has no name, no home, no family, and no recollection of his past. He meets up with a group of orphaned boys who are trying to survive on the streets during the Holocaust. The reader accompanies the protagonist on his personal journey, from his life before the "Jackboots", to his life in the Warsaw Ghetto, and, eventually, to his new life in the aftermath of the war.

How to Use This Book:

This is a compelling read and has wonderful appeal, especially to reluctant boy readers. *Milkweed* is a powerful literature circle resource and has wonderful examples of imagery. It covers the themes of Prejudice, Family, Good versus Evil, and Coming of Age. Students will easily respond to, and discuss, the incidents in this novel. It is an excellent example of historical fiction and would be a wonderful read-aloud or accompaniment to any historical study on this time period, World War II, or the Holocaust.

The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray

Chris Wooding. 2004.
0-439-54656-7

Sample Curriculum Links:

- * Intermediate Language Arts: Reading
- * Grade 9 English: Literature Studies and Reading
- * Grade 9 English: Media Studies
- * Grade 10 English: Language

Summary:

Thaniel is a young wych hunter. Working together with his teacher in a parallel London of the last century, he hunts the evil wych kin who terrorize the Old Quarter. While on one of these hunts, Thaniel discovers Alaizabel Cray, who seems crazed and possessed. Thaniel takes her in and they begin to search for her identity while dodging spurious lawmen, the criminal underworld, and a serial killer on the loose. As if that weren't enough, it soon

becomes clear that the wych kin are plotting world domination, and Alaizabel's past holds the key. The forces of good race to battle the forces of evil, but can Thaniel save the world, and Alaizabel, before time runs out?

How to Use This Book:

This novel combines elements of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and "Jack the Ripper", and weaves together the genres of horror, romance, fantasy, and mystery very effectively. It is a great reluctant reader book for both sexes, especially with its gory imagery, but the language is challenging enough to be great for advanced readers too. It is laced with history and classic horror elements, and would make an admirable grade 8, 9, or 10 literature circle choice. It would also be interesting to use as a comparative work with classics like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Students could research the real version of this time period and discover what is fact and what is fiction. They could also use it to launch a study into mythology, starting with that of the wych kin, or use it in a media studies class to compare the television character of Buffy with the characters in the book. ■

Are there books that have you buzzing?

Suggestions are welcome and can be sent to Martha Martin at

Martha_Martin@gecdsb.on.ca

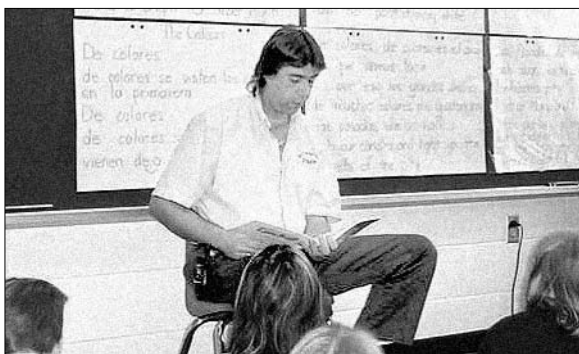
Literacy fair: more than just a book fair!

LAURA HILL

Matthews Hall Independent School,
London, Ontario

At my school, we have more than just a book fair. We have an event called a Literacy Fair. This year, we had various activities all week long. It began with a kick-off assembly during which a library dragon read the book *The Library Dragon*, a story about the importance of stories! Then various school employees were selected to read stories to students from kindergarten to grade 8 in their classrooms. Each reader was introduced with a reader biography, which included favourite stories and authors. These employees were people who would not normally read to the students, such as the secretary, custodian, principal, etc. This particular part of the day was very well received by the students. After the readings, the teachers engaged the students in follow-up activities. The students' work was then put on display in the halls outside the gym. The following day, we had a Literacy Loop, during which all students had a chance to view the work of their peers and visit the book sale. The Literacy Loop was advertised to parents, who came to see their childrens' work and wound up buying books. I'd be happy to share the books and follow-up activities in which each class participated as well as hear any other ideas from you for celebrating a literacy fair. For more information, you can e-mail me at library@matthewshall.on.ca. ■

The custodian reads Mrs. Toggle's Zipper, by Robin Pulver, to grade two students. Following the story, they did a dramatization which was videotaped.



*A balloon artist entertains Kindergarten students after the school secretary read *The Balloon Tree*, by Phoebe Gilman.*

Edukids invade WDHS library information centre

SHARON ARMSTRONG

Waterford District High School

The library information centre at Waterford District High School has instituted a literacy program for the preschool located on the premises. Our goal was twofold. We wanted to make the children at Edukids feel included in the whole school experience and to promote literacy by providing exposure to books and poetry in the library. Once a week, we provide a program of song, poetry and stories. Each session focuses on a theme. It could be dogs, snow, emotions – anything which might catch the Edukids' imagination. The pace is quick, moving from song to poetry to game to story. Visuals are used whenever possible to help engage the students. Stuffed toys and "Touch Bags" are especially popular. The children are encouraged to interact with the poetry and the stories. Questions, refrain repetition, and providing sound effects, among other things, allow them to participate and provide feedback for us to evaluate. Occasionally, time is made for students to "read" for themselves. As our collection expands, we will be able to indulge in this more often. What a great way to promote literacy in pre-schoolers as they participate in our school library's program! ■

What worked for you?

This is a fun place to share ideas that work for you. E-mail your idea or tip to *Teaching Librarian* editor, Brenda Dillon brenann@sympatico.ca.

Fun picture labelling

GAVIN MCINTOSH
Brechin Public School

Promoting early literacy has been fun this year. The primary students enjoy the friendly atmosphere and readily settle in to explore the book shelves. To make these explorations easier, especially for the JK students, I've added shelf labels with pictures of the books' characters. These easily-recognizable symbols of series characters, such as *Arthur*, *Berenstain Bears*, *Madeline*, and *Curious George*, allow children to find familiar favourites almost instantly. I also use picture labels for I Spy, rhyming, alphabet, and sing-along books. The pictures are cut out of catalogues, put beside the series name on the shelf label, and sealed with label protector tape or laminate. There are also a few of the picture labels in our non-fiction area, for topics such as pets and dinosaurs, to aid the children's transition to that section. While copyright could be an issue, the pictures are used solely to promote the publishers' books to readers. One unexpected result of the use of the symbols has been that the students have learned to sight read the characters' names. ■

No time for meetings?

BRENDA DILLON
Philip Pocock C.S.S.,
Dufferin-Peel CDSB

Do you have students interested in joining a book group but unable to find a suitable meeting time after school or at lunch? My bibliophiles solved that problem by deciding to meet every Friday morning for a half-hour before school. We meet from 7:45-8:15 in the Family Studies classroom. Why not use the school library? Well, the Family Studies teacher provides fresh muffins, coffee or tea.... It's quite civilized! Given such a tasty return on their investment, the students don't mind contributing to a treats fund. So far, it's working rather well. ■

Finding kids' comfort levels

GAVIN MCINTOSH
Brechin Public School

When primary students are ready to test their developing reading skills they can turn to the leveled Just Kids early chapter books from Scholastic Canada on the easy reading shelves. The children enjoy finding the same type of leveled readers that they use in their classrooms and are eager to demonstrate their reading ability. When they are ready to venture into the nearby fiction section, they can find the next set of leveled readers with more developed characters and slightly more challenging sentence structure. ■

Using BBS for virtual discussions

BRENDA DILLON
Philip Pocock C.S.S.,
Dufferin-Peel CDSB

Even with creative scheduling efforts, there are times when individual students can't make book group meetings or when a meeting has to be cancelled. But why should the lack of meeting time interfere with enthusiastic book discussion? It shouldn't! And now, it doesn't. I used QuickTopic, a free online bulletin board service, to set up a bulletin board for the Pocock Book Group. It was quick and easy to set up and is easy to use. QuickTopic generates a random letter/number string for each URL and is not indexed by search engines, making it difficult for unauthorized persons to find the discussion group – a security feature I like. Instead of making the URL public, I printed out a welcome message, with the URL, for distribution to book group members. Interest in this discussion forum is growing and it is proving a worthwhile supplement to meetings. Check it out at www.quicktopic.com. ■

Brightening the library with plush toys

GAVIN MCINTOSH
Brechin Public School

I have found that many parents of older students are very receptive to our requests for donations of plush toys. They tell me that their children have outgrown the toys and they just take up too much room. The colourful, cuddly animals have brightened our easy reading area and have made it more inviting for our youngest patrons. ■

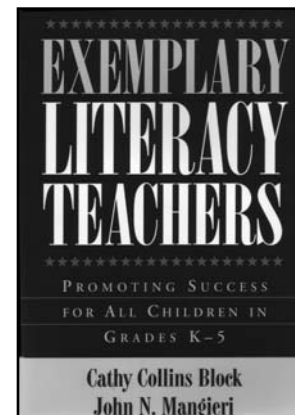
Reading Specialists and *Literacy Coaches*

EXEMPLARY LITERACY TEACHERS PROMOTING SUCCESS FOR ALL CHILDREN IN GRADES K-5,

Cathy Collins Block and John N. Mangieri

Based on a widely cited study of exemplary teachers, this accessible book illuminates the instructional techniques and behaviors that result in the most significant achievement gains at each grade level. It guides teachers in assessing their strengths and building their skills within six key domains of literacy instruction that are directly linked to student success. Students in reading methods courses and reading practica will find it a useful resource and text. Includes numerous reproducible materials.

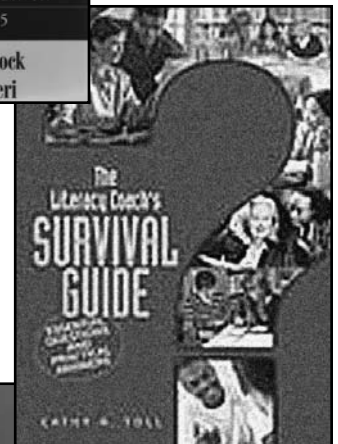
ISBN: 1-57230-891-5; Guilford Publications. 160 p. 2003. \$30.36



THE LITERACY COACH'S SURVIVAL GUIDE: ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS AND PRACTICAL ANSWERS, Cathy A. Toll

Find the answers to your literacy coaching questions in this user-friendly guide that gives you the tools and tips you need to promote more effective literacy instruction. With this book, you can better understand issues of educational change, handle the practical matters of coaching and learn how to overcome pressures from teachers and administrators. Added features that make this your essential quick-guide to literacy coaching includes a topical index of questions covered in the book and a narrative bibliography of additional resources.

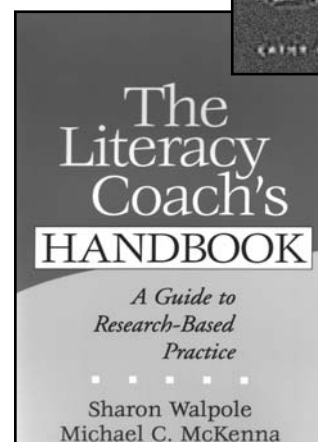
ISBN: 0-87207-565-6; International Reading Association. 192p. 2005. \$30.29



THE LITERACY COACH'S HANDBOOK A GUIDE TO RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICE, Sharon Walpole and Michael C. McKenna

This comprehensive guide presents information and strategies to help literacy coaches meet the demands of designing and directing an elementary reading program. Step by step, the book provides the knowledge needed to ensure that teachers and students benefit from the concepts and methods emerging from scientifically based reading research. Invaluable reproducible tables and figures and many detailed examples illustrate best practices for, collecting and analyzing school-level achievement data and selecting and organizing new curricula, texts, and resources, and more!

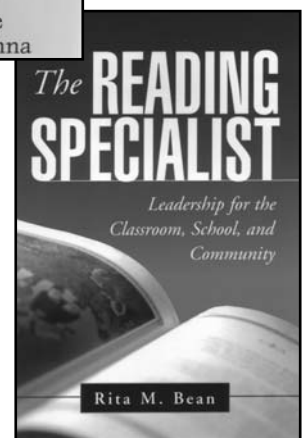
ISBN: 1-59385-034-4; Guilford Publications. 250 p. 2004. \$33.00



THE READING SPECIALIST LEADERSHIP FOR THE CLASSROOM, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY, Rita M. Bean

Timely and accessible, this book provides nuts-and-bolts information and guidance for reading specialists in grades K-12 as well as those preparing for certification. The focus is on the many responsibilities of today's reading specialist, from teaching individual students to taking a leadership role in the schoolwide literacy program. Including discussion questions, self-reflective exercises, and lively examples and vignettes. The book presents research-based frameworks for, working with struggling readers and their teachers, planning curriculum and conducting assessments writing winning grant proposals, and much more!

ISBN: 1-57230-982-2; Guilford Publications. 218 p. 2003. \$33.00



The OLAStore ★

K-12 Resources



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