

# THE Teaching Librarian

The Magazine of the Ontario School Library Association  
ISSN 1188679X

## Tributes to Caroline

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## The State of Elementary School Libraries

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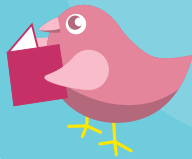
## Creating Inclusive and Welcoming Spaces for Students

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**back @** your library





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# THE Teaching Librarian

Volume 30, Issue 1 September 2022 ISSN 1188679X


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**back @ your library**



# This issue is dedicated in memory of **Caroline Freibauer.**

Editor-In-Chief of *The Teaching Librarian*  
2018 - 2022

1961 - 2022



# A message from The Editor

Kasey Whalley

Editor-in-Chief of *The Teaching Librarian*

## The remarkable thing about meeting Caroline...

...was learning just how unassuming and immeasurable her brilliance and kindness were. Walking into the board room of the OLA office to sit on a committee with library technicians, teacher librarians, and teachers to discuss the OSLA by-law language, I was greeted by a slim, brown-haired woman with electric green framed glasses. She was kind, witty, and unequivocally brilliant. She knew libraries and she knew schools, and she encouraged everyone in that room to share their own knowledge, experiences, and ideas for a common goal. She steered without pushing and led without leaving anyone behind. And she did it all with compassion and a keen intelligence that has left a wonderful impact on those who knew her and the wider library world.

I learned quickly (and was reminded often) that Caroline was a beautiful person with boundless enthusiasm and encouragement. Working with her on the *Teaching Librarian* while she was Editor was a privilege that I cannot even begin to explain. When she first disclosed her illness and asked if anyone from the editorial board would like to step in as interim editor, I reached out to offer my help – I was expecting maybe a co-editor role or advice on ways to support someone else in the role. It was her faith in my skills and her unwavering support that led me to embrace the role of interim editor. I will be forever grateful for her belief in me, and I'll do my best to publish a magazine that she would (I hope) be proud of.

This entire issue, and many before it, is a testament to the hard work, enthusiasm and pure love of libraries that Caroline brought to the *Teaching Librarian* as a contributor and as Editor-In-Chief. She was working on this magazine even while ill and curated most of the articles that are featured in this edition, including commissioning an updated version to her remarkable *State of the School Library*. Her vast professional library network, commitment to advocating and supporting school libraries and incredible journalistic knowledge were crucial to the success of this magazine. When we first spoke about the theme for this edition, we were at the height of the pandemic with many of us still working from home – but Caroline loved the idea of *Back@YourLibrary* and had hope that we would all be returning to our beloved library spaces. It breaks my heart that she will not be joining us on our return this year.

Language is a beautiful, wonderful tool, but the loss of Caroline is difficult to quantify with consonants and vowels.

The tributes that we have included in this edition are but a small snapshot of the incredible legacy that Caroline has left and the immeasurable impact she has had on those who knew her and the wider library world. The Editorial Board and I will miss her leadership, kindness, brilliance and flair. We are grateful for her time as Editor, but we are also just grateful for her; she will be greatly missed.

Caroline, may your heaven be an endless library and your rest be eternally peaceful. — Kasey Whalley ■



# A Tribute to Caroline Freibauer

## Editor of the Teaching Librarian

Beth Lyons

President of OSLA

**A**s many of you may know, the school library world lost a powerful ally, advocate, spokesperson, collaborator and friend in the summer. In the short time I knew her Caroline Freibauer left an impression on my heart. Her passion for school libraries, for all libraries really, is unmatched in anyone I have met along this journey. During my time with the OSLA council I have been in many meetings with Caroline and she is always quick to rally behind a new idea and collaborate to make the idea even better. She had a special way of making you feel like your idea was gold (even if it wasn't, yet) and she would work to help you process and unpack the idea to make it shine.

Becoming the President of the OSLA Council this past year was a daunting prospect. School libraries have had it rough the past couple of years (decades really) and knowing that you are about to be the face and the voice of something so many people hold dear felt a little scary. Caroline was always there to tell me I was on the right track, to give advice without criticism and to make sure I knew I could count on her for anything.

What made the news of Caroline's passing more bearable were the friendships and connections I have made on my teacher-librarian journey. I felt affirmation reading the tributes to Caroline posted on Twitter and Facebook by mutual friends and found comfort sharing memories with OSLA and CSL connections. So, if you are just starting out on your school library journey or into the thick of it after

a few years or hoping one day to be in the school library, my advice to you is to be like Caroline. Join OLA/OSLA. Connect with other school library professionals across the province and Canada. I don't mean you all have to nominate yourself for a council position (*but seriously, think about it*) but you can join the #OnLibChats, use the #ONSchoolLibraries or #SchoolLibraryJoy hashtags on Twitter to share your accomplishments, wonderings, blunders, and processes.

You could write or co-write an article for Teaching Librarian magazine or the Canadian School Libraries journal. You could write a paper for Treasure Mountain Canada.

**You can connect.**

**You can advocate.**

**You can share.**

And along the way you will meet amazing people and have the privilege to call them friends. You will learn more than you ever thought possible. You will share your love of libraries and books and stories. And you will help us keep Caroline's memory alive.

*Parts of this President's Report appeared on Beth Lyons' blog, The Librarian's Journey. ■*

# Caroline Freibauer Memorials

**Angela Thompson**

**Editorial Board Member, *The Teaching Librarian***

For me, Caroline was a mentor and a friend. She was an inspiration and a cheering section when life handed me a heart-breaking employment reassignment and then, a few years later, a cancer diagnosis of my own. I took to heart her faith that I could beat breast cancer like she did. Her strength helped me find mine. I am grateful for her kindness and her leadership on the editorial team of *Teaching Librarian*.

Her unwavering dedication to championing librarianship and inquiry of all kinds infused every interaction I had with her over this last decade. I am a better human being because I crossed paths with Caroline for a while on this journey. I will remember her.

**Kimberly Senf**

**Editorial Board Member, *The Teaching Librarian***

I got to know Caroline through my work on the editorial board of the *Teaching Librarian* magazine. She welcomed me to the editorial team a few years ago. She was an editor that gave space for new ideas and perspectives, and she always made me feel that my contributions were valued. Caroline and I never got the chance to meet in person. We may have sat in some of the same sessions at SuperConference, but our paths never officially crossed in person. We had made plans to finally meet at the conference, something that unfortunately never happened.

Working with Caroline on the editorial board was a highlight of the past few years. She was diligent in her work to ensure that we produced the best possible publication for school librarians. She brought her distinctive humour and keen eye for new stories to each meeting, and she was so encouraging of new writers. I was often in awe of her ability to turn the magazine around so quickly, and that she could do it all while looking after her own school library. She was certainly a whirlwind of productivity and she cared deeply about the work she was doing. She will be missed.

**Mary Doyle**

**Editorial Board Member, *The Teaching Librarian***

Caroline and I first bonded over a pen; wonder of wonders, an erasable pen that doesn't smudge, even if you are lefthanded! Next thing I know, speaking of pens led to us writing together for the *Teaching Librarian*. Caroline was a persuasive recruiter and gave me the opportunity to

fulfill one of my longtime career goals. This first encounter happened at the OLA office at the meeting of the OSLA bylaw committee. From the start it was evident that Caroline was passionate about school libraries and held the professionalism and work of all library staff in high regard.

It was always a joy to connect with Caroline, be it at SuperConference, a phone call, or an email from her just to check in. She always showed care and compassion for others regardless of her own challenges. She had style, charisma and class. I feel fortunate to have had such a brave and kind role model in my life.

I recently just bought a new pack of those pens and thought of Caroline. Even though you are gone, remarkable woman, you will not be erased from our memories, and as you encouraged us, we will write on.

**Trish Hurley**

**Editorial Board Member, *The Teaching Librarian***

I first met Caroline digitally. She was looking for writers and editorial board members for the *Teaching Librarian*. She was warm, encouraging and enthusiastic about adding a new voice to the magazine. After a few issues, I attended an in-person board meeting downtown Toronto. It was my first time meeting Caroline and again, she was warm, encouraging and enthusiastic - this was most definitely a theme with her. Covid hit, and therefore all subsequent meetings with her were via Zoom. In every meeting, I saw her flair, a very strong vision for the magazine and an infectious personality.

Caroline worked full time, but also dedicated hours upon hours to the *Teaching Librarian*. These hours were strictly volunteer; from organizing the issue to the writers to the edits. My emails back and forth were numerous, positive, supportive and always enthusiastic about the next issue! After she disclosed her illness, she said in an email, "My goal is to continue with as many of my passions as possible to ensure I live each day to the fullest." I have read and reread this line a number of times since her passing. May we all take her comment to heart and embrace our passions and truly live each day to the maximum. Caroline, you were a leader full of passion and dedication. I am a better person for knowing you. I will miss you, my friend.

**Shelagh Straughan**

**Columnist, *The Teaching Librarian***

While I only had the pleasure of knowing Caroline for a couple of years, I very much appreciated her guidance and encouragement in our library advocacy work. She welcomed me to the *Teaching Librarian* community with the goal of



including the voice of independent school libraries. While I was initially a bit intimidated by her wealth of experience, her lovely warm nature quickly made me feel that I had something to share, and I suspect that this championing of others was one of her superpowers. I am grateful to Caroline for allowing this connection to TL and will do my best to honour her spirit through library advocacy.

**Anita Brooks Kirkland**

**Chair, Canadian School Libraries**

Caroline was a friend as well as a colleague, and I am devastated by her loss. I first got to know Caroline when she was planning an ambitious Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) action research project at her school, and visited several secondary libraries in my board to mine ideas from me and my teacher-librarian colleagues. That was my first taste of Caroline's approach to learning and leading. Since then we have served on boards together, worked on huge projects, like the CSL Research Toolkit, presented on several occasions at Super Conference in particular, and collaborated on professional publications.

Caroline was a true original thinker. She asked the most salient questions that nobody else had thought of. She loved research and data. She was so curious, and was willing to take risks in the name of deeper learning. Her journalistic expertise elevated our school library publications immeasurably. Caroline was dedicated to libraries and to teacher-librarianship, and the profession is better because of her contribution. But what I will remember the most about Caroline is her kindness, her generosity, and most of all her optimism. Where others would have succumbed to despair, Caroline fought through her illness, writing articles and working on projects when others would have given up. She kept going, as much for us as for herself. I miss Caroline so very much, but am so grateful for having known her. Rest in peace, my dear friend.

**Diana Maliszewski**

**Former Editor-In-Chief, *The Teaching Librarian***

It was in 2016 that I had the chance to work in depth with Caroline. She applied to be on the editorial board of *The Teaching Librarian* when I was the editor-in-chief. It was clear that she was tremendously overqualified - she had actual journalism experience - and we very happily welcomed her to the editorial board. She debuted in Volume 24 Issue 1 of *TingL*.

Caroline was an absolute gift to work with at OSLA. If you had the fortune to be on a committee with Caroline, you knew that work would get done. While she was on the editorial board, she edited efficiently, met deadlines, and knew the best way to get the most out of writers, readers, and everyone involved in the process of putting together a magazine. She introduced a new column in Volume 25 called "Crowd Sourced", which

involved consulting multiple school library professionals for answers to pressing issues. It was for these reasons, and many more, that I felt confident enough to "retire" from running *The Teaching Librarian* - because Caroline agreed to take over the responsibilities.

Caroline achieved more in her short stint as OSLA editor-in-chief than any other leader. She was the one who helped *TingL* pivot to an online version and back again. It was under Caroline that there was better representation from more areas of school librarianship present on the editorial board and increased the number of contributors to each issue of the periodical. Volume 27 Issue 1 is a must-read for anyone wishing to understand the status of school libraries in Ontario, with the quantitative and qualitative data to back it up. This is part of the massive legacy she leaves.

Caroline's funeral was on Saturday, August 6 in Brantford. Beth Lyons, Kate Johnson-McGregor, Alanna King and I attended. It was a testimony to her to see how filled the church was with friends and family gathering to pay tribute to an extraordinary person. One of the final gifts Caroline gave to us, posthumously, was the reason for us to reconnect in-person. COVID and circumstances had separated us, but Caroline got many of us back together again.

Thanks Caroline; we will miss you

A longer version of this tribute can be found on [Diana's blog](#)

If your tribute was submitted to the Teaching Librarian and missed or you would like to write something in remembrance of Caroline, please contact us at [theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com](mailto:theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com). Your words and memories about Caroline matter and we would like to ensure they are part of our memorial. ■



# TingL Contributors

Volume 30, Issue 1



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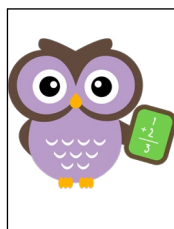
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## TingL Mission

### *The Teaching Librarian*

*The Teaching Librarian* (TingL) is the official magazine of the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA). 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 programs and curriculum development that furthers exemplary educational objectives. The magazine fosters effective collaboration within the school library community and provides a forum to share experience and expertise.

## TingL References

*The Teaching Librarian* is a general magazine for OSLA members and not a scholarly journal. If your article does require citation of sources, please provide them within the text of your article or column with as much or as little bibliographic information as necessary for identification (e.g. book title, year). If you feel that the works you are citing require full identification, please provide a bibliography at the end of your piece, formatted according to the latest Chicago Manual of Style (16<sup>th</sup> edition) or APA Style.

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## TingL Submission Guidelines

Please Note: Themes are subject to change.

January 2023 V. 30, Issue 2	“Literacies @ your library” Deadline: November 16, 2022
May 2023 V. 30, Issue 3	“Censorship @ your library” Deadline: March 30, 2023
September 2023 V. 31 Issue 1	Theme and Deadline TBA

Articles of 150-250 words, 500 words, or 800-1,300 words are welcome. Articles, when approved, should be accompanied by high quality images and/or graphics whenever possible. Text must be sent electronically, preferably in a Microsoft Word (or compatible) file. Images or graphics must be sent separately in a digital format, such as .jpeg, .png, .tiff, or .ai. The minimum resolution must be 1000 px at 150 dpi. With photos that contain a recognized individual, please secure the individual’s permission in writing for the 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, content, and style. Journalistic style is preferred. *The Teaching Librarian* adheres to Canadian Press Style. Articles must include the working title, name of author, and email address in the body of the text. OSLA reserves the right to use pictures in other OSLA publications unless permission is limited or denied at the time of publishing.

When writers consent to having articles published in *The Teaching Librarian* magazine, permission is also granted to online distribution of the periodical through accessola.com and educational databases, without expectation of financial compensation. Ownership and copyright of the article is still retained by the original authors. Any questions about submissions should be directed to the Editor of *The Teaching Librarian*: theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com.

## TingL Subscriptions

*The Teaching Librarian* is a benefit of OSLA membership. To become a member, contact:

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# The Editor's Notebook



Kasey Whalley

**W**hen our editorial board first decided on the theme for this issue, we truly didn't know if we would be back at our libraries this school year. Now that the 2022-2023 school year is on the horizon, it strikes me as the perfect time to reflect on going back – or not – to our libraries.

*The Teaching Librarian* is proud to feature a revisit of “The State of the School Library” with data from People for Education. The infographic has been updated with new data representing nearly 95 per cent of elementary schools in Ontario. This striking and beautiful visual works wonderfully in tandem with the visual essay and featured “School Library Joy” campaign by OSLA President Beth Lyons. Seeing our situations and committing to working together to strengthen our presence, longevity, and relevance in education is crucial to the support and success of Ontario students.

For those of us to are returning to beloved school library spaces, I hope that you continue to move forward with innovative library programming, amazing and reflective resource selection, and a renewed sense of purpose. Returning to work in a school library means that we can use our past experiences to capitalize on opportunities to create new and ongoing relationships with students, staff and other stakeholders. Contributors Jonelle St. Aubyn and Mackenzie Hilton, in their respective articles “Starting in September” and “Welcome Back to the Reference Desk,” explore the idea of coming back to continue building our libraries. Returning to the library doesn't mean doing the same things as before; it's a way to build upon our foundations and recreate our programming to support our students.

If you're not returning to the library, I know that making a decision like that can be very difficult; I want to congratulate all of our library professionals finding their home outside of the library this year in new roles. Embracing this new adventure with the same wonder and magic that you've filled your libraries with can only lead to success. Articles by Jennifer

Brown and Beth Lyons (“Choosing Change” and “Leaving a Legacy Document” respectively) take a deeper dive into what it means to leave a library for new challenges and roles.

As a new school year begins, hopefully with hope and excitement, it's a perfect time to start thinking and planning professional development activities that can support our personal education journeys. This issue is full of wonderful resources and articles that specifically apply to school library professionals who want to continue developing their own learning and inquiry practices. The articles on Canadian School Library Day by Anita Brooks-Kirkland from CSL (“Inventing the Future in the Library Learning Commons”), ECOO initiatives and events (“Professional Learning for Ontario Educators”), and the return of our professional resource column present a variety of ways in which school library professionals can kick-start and continue their own professional learning.

One of the parts of returning to the library that I love, and look forward to the most, is the books. Fall is a fantastic time to take a headfirst dive into new, exciting and relevant books and materials. In our “Meet the Author” feature, Mary Doyle spoke with Canadian author Joel A. Sutherland about the value of horror books for children, *Haunted Canada* legacies and great recommendations for Canadian authors who write children's and YA horror. *The Teaching Librarian* would also like to announce the return of our book review column “Shelf Awareness” now curated by Lisa Nobel; we are eager to see what wonderful books and resources will be featured in the future of that column.

A new school year has arrived, filled with potential and challenges. I hope everyone meets the 2022-2023 school year with a continued sense of purpose, joy, and excitement. Whether you are taking on a new role or returning to a much-loved space, I'd like to wish everyone good luck and happy reading this school year! ■



# President's Report



Beth Lyons

“

**“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”**  
— Nelson Mandela

”

**A**cross Ontario, students, educators and community members are returning to schools and school libraries as the 2022-2023 school year begins. The physical school library space may be unchanged since you left it in June, but as educators, I hope that you have had the opportunity to rest, recharge, renew and perhaps even reconnect with pieces of yourself that felt lost or unrecognizable over the past few years. No one can argue that the last three years in education haven't been some of the hardest in recent memory. Throughout this summer I hope you found time for a book that was pure pleasure, time to sit near or on the water and just listen to the sounds of the waves, time to walk through a canopy of trees and feel joy in the shadows and light, time to nap or time to sleep in or wake up early just because you wanted to, time to share a meal with people that bring on the belly laughs, time to dive into the professional read that had been waiting for you all year, and time to just breathe in the moments of rest that were so needed for so many of us.

Even as the summer began to unfold before us, school library professionals were posting on social media about their plans for the coming school year. Perhaps some of you are like me, you find joy in the planning, thinking and considering for how a learning space might best serve the needs of a community and its stakeholders. While summer can be a time for educators to relax and take time away from their lives within the education system, for some it is also a time to focus on their own learning, their own professional development and connections within a professional learning network. And maybe, for many it's a mix of both. Whatever describes your summer you are now Back@YourLibrary and planning for your school library program.

The last few years have changed us, have changed the education system and have changed our world at large. School libraries are more important than ever as the “heart and hub” of a school community. As you return to the physical space of your school library, take time to consider the ways in which you as an educator have changed over the past few years, the ways in which the needs of the learners in your school have changed, how the methods we use to communicate with caregivers and grown-ups have been altered or need to be altered and how our need to reconnect as a community has changed.

How might your school library programming consider the voices of students, educators and the wider community? Which voices have been missing, and which voices have traditionally been given more power within the school library? How can we ensure equity among voices of all community members through flexible scheduling, collaboration with and among educators, makerspace opportunities and embracing an inquiry mindset?

While the physical space of the school library remains a place of shelves, tables, chairs, books and more, how will the return of learners, makers, tinkerers, creators, thinkers, readers, writers, advocates and inquirers drive change forward in the school library?

I look forward to following your return to the school library this fall and through the school year. I hope you will share your journey with OSLA on Twitter by tagging us (@OSLAcouncil) and using the hashtag #ONSchoolLibraries so we can continue to learn forward together and share in our school library advocacy work. ■

# Shelf Awareness: Back @ Your Library

Lisa Noble

## It's September again:

**T**ime for the inevitable nervous flutters in the stomach, for both students and teachers; to revel in the cooling of the air and the last days with plenty of light left after school; the beauty of a new pencil case full of sharp pencils and unsmudged markers; and, of course, books! For this back to school time of year, I've chosen some books that involve school as a setting.

*I Kissed Shara Wheeler*

Casey McQuiston

St Martin's Press, May 2022

I had the chance to read an ARC of this terrific queer mystery/romance from NetGalley, and gave it a five star review.

Chloe Green, the main character, is working on surviving her last year of high school in small-town conservative Alabama. Not easy, when she's aiming to be valedictorian of her conservative Christian high school, while being her confidently lesbian self. Her main opposition is the utterly perfect prom queen, and principal's daughter, Shara Wheeler. When Shara pulls a disappearing act right after prom (and right after kissing Chloe unexpectedly), Chloe is determined to find her. Winning valedictorian because the competition disappears just isn't how Chloe rolls.

This is McQuiston's first YA novel, sliding over from the New Adult category. They have kept the things that made so many fans of their writing. There is a terrific supporting cast to keep the main character going. In this case, there are two other people that Shara kissed before disappearing, making it necessary for the three "kissees" to work together in trying to find her, as well as Chloe's crew of friends who keep her sane. All are well-drawn and bring different identities into the mix. There's also always a truly deep sense of place, of knowing that the writer has lived through the emotional roller coaster than can be high school, and knows how to make the reader feel like they are right there.

### What will your students appreciate?

The deep sense of identification that comes with a McQuiston novel, the amazing group of characters, and the joy of finding themselves in a book on a shelf at their library.

*Hollow Fires*

Samira Ahmed

Little Brown, May 2022

This title also leans into mystery, but in a very different geographical space. *Hollow Fires* is set in 2022 New York where it's trying hard to be spring but not quite getting there; if you've got a grey concrete, slushy vibe going on in your head, that's the right one. Ahmed, who most of you will know from her novels *Internment* and *Love, Hate and Other Filters*, has written a very powerful novel about privilege, stereotypes and which voices we choose to listen to.

Safiya Mirza is one of two narrators in this story. She is a high school senior at an elite school and is headed for journalism school after editing her high school paper. She has a history

## Welcome to Shelf Awareness!

This fixture of *The Teaching Librarian* will highlight a few books you might want to think about for your YA readers. I'm hoping to cover a wide variety with my suggestions, including #OwnVoices, writers from different communities, as well as different genres. I'd love to know what you're looking for, and what your YA readers are looking for!

You can find me talking about books (and other stuff) on Instagram @lisanoble6236 and on Twitter @nobleknits2.

Let me know what your readers are making noise about!

of bumping heads with the school administration around the topics she chooses to write about. When the newspaper's account is hacked by a white supremacist, and one of her columns is targeted, the administration insists on shutting her down. Safiya, along with friends, is determined to figure out what's actually going on.

Interwoven with her story is the story of 14-year-old Jawad Ali, a Grade 9 student at a public school not far from Safiya's. He builds a cosplay jet pack for an afterschool maker club, and a teacher mistakes it for a bomb. Jawad's life is largely destroyed by this event and its aftermath. His disappearance shortly thereafter makes Safiya's journalistic senses tingle and she becomes determined to figure out what has happened to Jawad.

Jawad and Safiya are the twin narrators of this powerful story. Their parallel lenses on privilege and power, as kids of colour in a largely white environment, make for riveting reading. The reader is genuinely asked to question what role they might take in the narrative and where they fit on the power and privilege continuum. There are no easy answers here.

#### **What will your students enjoy?**

Great capture of mood and place, the eternal struggle with administration, a great chance to think about what truth is in our age of fake news, and a surprising amount of fun in the interaction between Safiya and her friends. This would make a great book club or lit circle read.

#### **Montague Twins: *The Witch's Hand* and *The Devil's Music***

**Nathan Page and Drew Shannon  
Knopf, 2020**

To finish up this column, I'm staying mysterious, but veering over to graphic novels and Canadian content! *The Witch's Hand* was nominated in the White Pine category of Forest of Reading for 2022, and the second volume *The Devil's Music* was released this year.

This series hits so many spots for young adult readers! There are mysteriously absent parents (check), a small town where things are more than a little weird (check, especially for Gravity Falls fans), budding supernatural powers in the main

characters (check), and characters who are trying to figure out who they are in a wider world (check). People talk about it being a mashup of *Nancy Drew* and *The Hardy Boys* mysteries, some Scooby-Doo exploring with a dose of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

#### **What will make your students happy?**

Throw in a very groovy late 60's timeline, lots of terrific villains and creepiness, and one main character working through coming out to his best friends, and you've got a series that is pretty much guaranteed to please a lot of your readers. Add in connections to the Salem Witch Trials, particularly in the first book, and the bias against early rock and roll music in the second, and you've got some really interesting stuff to talk about in a book club or classroom literature circle. As an added bonus, there's a playlist for each book on the Montague Twins website: <https://www.montaguetwins.com/>. Acclaimed YA author Maggie Stiefvater is also a huge fan of the series, and says that if readers love her *Raven Cycle*, they will also like this.

That's it for Shelf Awareness for this time around. I wish you a fall filled with cool breezes, as little stress as possible, and lots to read! ■

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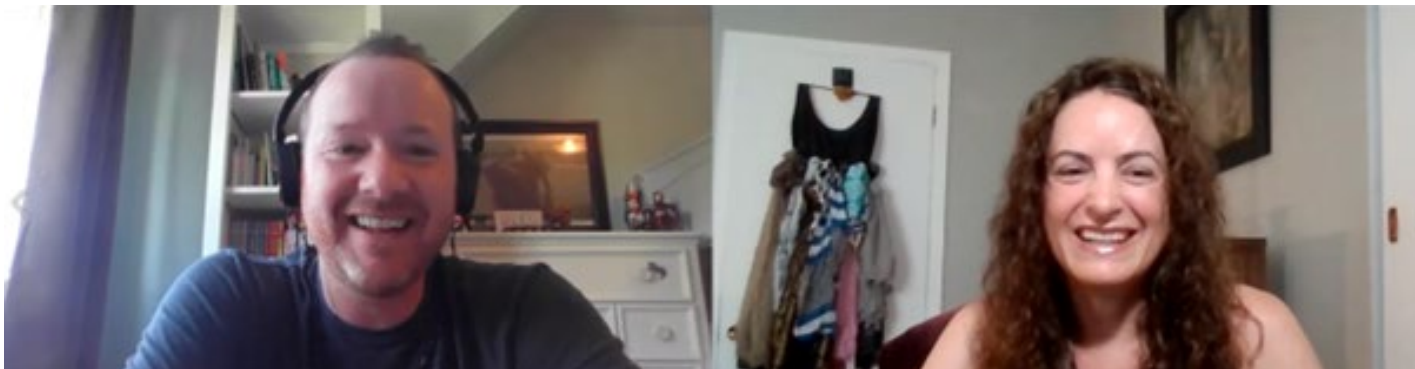
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Mary Doyle

# Meet the Author

## Joel A. Sutherland



**I recently had the opportunity to interview children's horror author and librarian, Joel A. Sutherland. We discussed not only his work, but the trend toward horror for children in general. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.**

**TingL:** Now that we are “Back @ Your Library”, we are able to do reader's advisory services a little better than we were able to do online. The surprising thing for me has been the uptick in interest in horror at the elementary level. I've been thinking about why that is, so you came to mind, since many students are requesting *Haunted Canada*.

I love hearing that! *Haunted Canada* bridges that gap from the interest in real ghost stories to then reading novels as well, which is great. As a librarian, and as a reader, I had that comic book bridge—from comics, to fantasy, to everything including, obviously, horror. Today I see a lot of kids going from nonfiction to fiction. They're wanting to read nonfiction instead of a novel, but then when they get hooked into reading in general, then they start reading everything. Of course we still see many kids starting with graphic novels as well.

**There is also that moment of confusion, when I show students that the *Haunted Canada* books are in the nonfiction section. “Wait! Why? Are they real?”**

I get asked that question every time I present. When I say the *Haunted Canada* books are nonfiction and the kids' eyes go wide or they look confused, I cut to the chase and say that whether or not you believe in ghosts, these accounts of what happened to people are very real to them. I do my research, interview people, talk to them, read about what they experienced, learn about the place where the scary stuff happened and report on it.

**While we're on the topic, what does your research process look like?**

I have what I like to think of as the largest private collection of true Canadian ghost books and research magazine articles, printouts, websites, blogs and everything else. I am constantly reading for inspiration and to find locations that are considered to be haunted, so then I can go and do my own research. I want to make sure that every book has at least one story from each province, and at least one, two or three stories from the northern territories as well, so that wherever you are in the country reading the book, you are going to read stories that are close to home, that maybe you can go investigate on your own (if you have really cool parents that are also brave). You also learn about a lot of places that you have never been to before.

I also put my librarian background and education to use and use interlibrary loan and different provincial archives and universities. I'll write to or cold call locations that I'm researching, or try to reach people directly that have been quoted in articles. Now I'm doing more interviewing of people I know, since it turns out most people have a ghost story. Which I don't. This is the second thing I say in every school visit, after telling students about *Haunted Canada* being nonfiction; I tell kids I haven't ever seen a ghost myself. But so many people have. Strangers come up to me during visits and tell me their ghost stories, and some of them might end up in the books. Friends and family have some incredible stories too. It's always exciting when I can interview someone I know

*continued on page 18*

...continued from page 17

and trust and get a really good story that I can include.

### Why do you think it is important for children to read horror?

I strongly believe that horror is important for children. I'm not just saying that as a children's horror author, but as a parent, a librarian, and a reader as well. I think that all ages find a lot of therapy in reading scary stories. I would say that the world is a scary place and kids know that. We can't just wave a magic wand and make everything perfect all the time. We all go through a process of learning how to deal with the scary stuff in life and part of that is through other people's experiences, whether it is fiction or nonfiction. When you read any genre, you are developing tools to handle real life situations. I feel like horror especially, almost more than any other genre, really equips us to deal with the scary things in real life. I always feel like if you can handle a scary book or movie, and get through it and face your fears in that safe way you are better prepared to deal with it in real life.

### Do you think children are more interested in horror because there is more being written for and marketed to children, or are publishers and filmmakers responding to a need?

I've done a lot of reading about this, long before the pandemic. I'm fascinated by horror fiction and the cyclical nature of it — when it is popular, then goes away, then comes back. I've seen this many times in my life and throughout history; there are these boom periods. There is a correlation between the really scary times in the world, and then in the next year or two, a huge rise in horror fiction and movies. This has been documented after world wars, after depressions, after global famines — any time there is a lot of bad stuff in the world and times are grim and bleak, soon after you see this big spike in horror fiction. It seems counter-intuitive. I think creators process what they are living through, so if they are going through tough times — like we all do in a moment like say in a global pandemic — it is going to have an impact on what they are creating. So a lot of what is being produced is a lot darker, maybe subtly or directly, because it helps the creators cope. And I'll just point out the obvious here, *Stranger Things* coming out was a cultural phenomenon that was popular with kids as well as adults. We've seen this before with *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and the *Hunger Games*; one thing hits it big and taps into the zeitgeist, and everyone is looking for

### Joel recommends...

#### Canadian Horror Fiction Authors for Children

Marina Cohen

Latest release: *Shadow Grave* (Macmillian, 2022)

Jeff Szpirglas

Latest release: *Countdown to Danger: House of Horror* (Scholastic, 2022)

Angela Misri

Latest release: *Valhamster* (Cormorant, 2022)

Adrienne Kress

Latest release: *Bendy: The Lost Ones* (Scholastic, 2021)

Marty Chan

TL Suggests: *Haunted Hospital* (Orca, 2020)

Mahtab Narsimham

TL suggests: *Eerie Tales from the East Series* (Stardust Stories)

Kenneth Oppel

TL suggests: *This Dark Endeavor: The Apprenticeship of Victor Frankenstein* (Simon Schuster, 2011)

something else like it. A new season of *Stranger Things* comes out and there is renewed interest, and then everyone wants to watch something like a *Fear Street* movie series, or a show based on Christopher Pike's books. The same goes for books. Kids are looking for stuff like *Stranger Things* right now. So I would definitely say the fact that *Stranger Things* came out when it did and then we went through this really dark time, led to what we are seeing now in 2022, with a huge interest in horror and a big spike in the demand for it.

### When a student asks for a scary book, it is sometimes challenging to find the right book. How do you find the right amount of “scary”?

Yes, that is the science of and a bit of the magic of Readers Advisory. I think there is a science to it, and then a lot of it is just case by case, where every kid has different needs and interests. Sometimes what you think is a slam dunk book recommendation totally falls flat, and then something else you just sort of pull off the shelf and say, “Well there’s this too,” they respond “Yes! That’s the one!” It’s sometimes hard to predict. It’s those questions that you ask as a librarian about what they are interested in. A key part with horror is what they are comfortable with. I think finding out what they have read or seen already is a good starting point. It’s a good temperature check on what they were comfortable with in the past. Then you ask if they want something similar to that, or if they want to step it up a little bit. Finding the right topic, themes, or storylines in horror stories that appeal to them will also help. In the *Haunted* series I picked very distinct storylines so that any one of them can be read as stand-alone books. I wanted each one to have a unique hook. *Kill Screen* is about a haunted video game that comes to life, so kids that are into gaming and want to try horror, that might be a good place to start. Even if it starts to get a bit scary at times — as they are learning what scares them and what their limits are — their passion for video games maybe is enough to get them past it. Find something that is appealing to the reader. That’s often enough to get them through. They’ll come back and they are so proud that they faced their fears, they read this scary book, and they’re ok. They came through it, they’re fine and they’re ready to try something else.

**You have the *Haunted Canada* series and the *Haunted* series. What are you working on right now?**



The French translation of *Screamers* is coming out in the fall. Next year *Haunted Canada 12* will be coming out. Next year is also the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Haunted Canada* (the first three were written by Pat Hancock.) My debut young adult novel, *House of Ash and Bone*, is coming out in September 2023 through Penguin Random House. Surprise surprise — there’s ghosts, there’s a haunted house! But it was a lot of fun to write this one because being a young adult novel, I could really

sink my teeth into the scarier, gorier or more mature subject matter, themes, storylines, plot devices etc. It’s also much longer, so I could really develop the atmosphere, the setting and the characters.

**Now that we are back, author visits are also coming back. Are you doing school visits?**

Author visits are one of the best parts of the job. When you are writing you spend a lot of time on your own, and you have to first and foremost write for yourself. Even now when I write something I wonder will anyone even read this and if they do will they like it? Those thoughts never go away. So it’s so great when you then get the chance to speak with readers and other writers and have that connection. I’ve been so lucky to be able to travel across the country with *Haunted Canada*. Through the pandemic I did some virtual visits and it has been great, but now I am thrilled to get back too. If people are interested in a school visit, they can reach out to me through my website at [www.joelasutherland.com](http://www.joelasutherland.com) and go to the contact page. My visits are a mix of Canadian history and geography, famous people, and stories from the *Haunted Canada* series. I talk about writing fiction and where story ideas come from and how kids can use their own life as inspiration to write any type of story. And of course I talk a lot about ghosts, but I keep it age appropriate. I make sure kids aren’t too scared. ■

Anita Brooks Kirkland

# Inventing the Future in the Library Learning Commons

## Canadian School Library Day 2022



Canadian School Libraries is pleased to proclaim Monday October 24 as Canadian School Library Day / Journée nationale des bibliothèques scolaires canadiennes (CSLD/JNBSC). CSLD provides an opportunity to celebrate the unique contribution of school libraries to student success and well-being.

The theme of CSLD 2022 is **Inventing the Future in the Library Learning Commons**. Necessity is the mother of invention, as the saying goes, and nowhere has this been more evident than in the response of school library professionals across Canada to the realities of the ongoing pandemic. And inventive you have been! CSL has been tracking the trends, and here's what we've seen:

- Increased development of the virtual library learning commons
- An emphasis on digital literacy and global competencies
- An emphasis on diverse collections and inclusive programming
- Attention to the role of the library in supporting wellness
- Expanding student engagement through making and doing, including virtually
- Outreach to the whole school community to inspire reading and learning

Canadian School Library Day provides a welcome opportunity to celebrate how school libraries are rising to the challenge so creatively, helping to shape the future of education.

### Share Success Stories on Canadian School Library Day

How are you inventing the future? Can you connect with one

of CSL's emerging trends? Perhaps you are creating a new trend to inspire others. **However you are celebrating Canada's school libraries, we want the world to hear.** Use [CSLD graphics](#) and resources from Canadian School Libraries. Share your celebrations with the district / province / country / world through social media using the hashtag #CSLD2022

### More Events and Making Connections

We invite you to celebrate these other important events and make connections to your own school library program and CSLD. Each sponsoring organization offers ideas and resources for making the most of their events. Go all out or focus on one theme or special event!

October is **International School Library Month**, sponsored by the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL). The theme for ISLM 2022 is Reading for Global Peace and Harmony. The IASL supports ISLM with international resources and activities. [Find out more about ISLM.](#)

October is **Canadian Library Month**, sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA). All month long, libraries and library partners across Canada are raising awareness of the valuable role libraries play in Canadians' lives. Find out more here.

**I Read Canadian Day (IRCD)** is on November 2, 2022. IRCD is a national day of celebration of Canadian books for young people. This is a day dedicated to 'reading Canadian' and will empower families, schools, libraries and organizations to host local activities and events. **IRCD challenges the nation to "Read Canadian" for 15 minutes.** Young people are encouraged to read, or be read to, a Canadian book of their choice. [Find out more about IRCD.](#)

**Media Literacy Week** takes place October 24 to 28, sponsored by MediaSmarts. MLW is an annual event promoting digital media literacy across Canada. Schools, libraries, museums and community groups organize events and activities throughout the week. Canadian School Libraries is a Media Literacy Week Collaborator organization and our fall symposium TMC7 is on the MLW calendar. [Find out more about MLW](#)

Whatever your approach, Canadian School Library Day and all of these events are designed to celebrate what you do. School libraries are indeed inventing the future. **!**



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# Supporting All Readers Through a Structured Literacy Approach

**W**ith pandemic restrictions lifting and many schools seeing a return to normal this fall, there is one topic that has been on many educators' minds: *learning loss*. Months of online schooling and illness-related absences have resulted in countless children falling behind — particularly when it comes to reading. In fact, a recent U.S. study by the [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) found the pandemic set reading levels for third- and fourth-graders back by almost two decades. What makes this especially tragic is that research shows if a child is not reading well by the end of third grade, they are unlikely ever to catch up.

But even before COVID-19 turned our world upside down, concerns around reading development were rising here in Ontario. This is what ultimately led to the **Right to Read Inquiry**, a year-long investigation launched in 2019 by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) that questioned whether Ontario public schools were failing to support students with dyslexia. The results were damning, with the OHRC finding that many schools were using outdated instruction methods, such as balanced literacy, in their classrooms. This is problematic for many reasons but is especially detrimental to students with reading disabilities.

That's because decades of research have shown that the best way to teach students with dyslexia is through an approach known as **structured literacy** — a term coined by the International Dyslexia Association to describe the many evidence-based instruction methods that align with the science of reading. Structured literacy programs are rooted in the knowledge that reading is not a natural process. Instead, children must be taught to read directly, explicitly, and systematically. A structured literacy approach also addresses the key foundational elements that make up a skilled reader: phonological awareness, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Reading specialists have been using structured literacy in intervention for many years. At Elmwood School, our 1:1 tutoring program uses a structured literacy approach known as Orton-Gillingham (OG). This program helps struggling

readers by explicitly teaching the connections between letters and sounds. One of the challenges of the English language is that while it contains just 26 letters, these letters combine to create roughly 44 speech sounds — and there are over 250 ways to spell those sounds. The OG method simplifies this process by teaching students to apply rules and generalizations. This helps show that English is actually a fairly standardized language (even though it doesn't always seem that way).

A structured literacy approach like this one is essential for students with reading disabilities, but it can be beneficial for *all* children. That is why many schools, including mine, have also begun implementing these strategies in the classroom. At Elmwood, for instance, we have provided our Junior School staff with training in structured literacy to ensure all student learning is rooted in the science of reading. We are also developing a new language scope and sequence that conforms to current research on how children learn to read. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we have introduced a universal screening program that sees all children from kindergarten to Grade 2 screened three times a year. The data collected from these assessments helps inform our teaching, thus preventing the need for more serious intervention down the line.

On a broader scale, the Ontario Ministry of Education recently released a document titled *Effective Early Reading Instruction: A Guide for Teachers*. In it, they recommend sweeping changes to how reading is taught to our youngest students. The document outlines the need for systematic and explicit phonics instruction, highlights the importance of phonological awareness in early reading development, and emphasizes the need for ongoing assessment. Though the document is not without its faults, it is a solid step forward in our province's approach to early literacy instruction — and it could not have come at a better time.

As we continue to navigate our way out of this pandemic, our students are going to need our full support if they are going to thrive. By adopting a structured literacy approach, we can make a positive impact in our schools — one reader at a time. ■

# Welcome Back to the Reference Desk

## The Big 3 of Reference Assistance

**W**orking at the reference desk of three academic libraries has informed me of the common challenges students face when conducting research. Knowing the common challenges new researchers face allows library professionals to create new research and reference guides and devise alternative methods of instruction. Here are the top three challenges students request assistance with at the reference desk and some strategies to address these needs.

### Challenge # 1 - Database Instruction

Many interactions at the reference desk involve students asking about databases. Students are often unsure of what database to use, and how to use databases effectively. Google can be a good place to devise a research topic, however, when searching for articles and peer-reviewed sources, students benefit most from searching databases.

#### Strategy:

Directing students to where they can find course-specific resources gives them a great place to start their research. The UTM Library, for example, has on its website useful “starting points” for students, which contain links to databases relevant to specific courses. Once students know how and where they can access databases, they can begin searching for articles.

Demonstrating how to search a database using the student’s specific question is another great way to set students on the right path for research. I like to show students how to experiment with key terms and subject headings, as this is a great way to narrow and broaden search results. Using

the student’s research question in the demonstration kickstarts the brainstorming process for new search terms and strategies and results in the student leaving the reference desk not only with the know-how to locate resources themselves, but also with some articles in hand. I try to conclude these reference interactions by emailing the student permalinks to the relevant sources we found together during the demonstration.

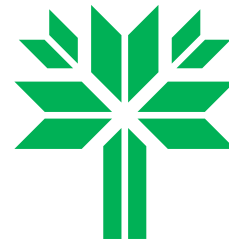
### Challenge #2 - Article Evaluation

A common pitfall is the search for the *perfect article*. After devising a research question, students will search databases for articles. When students select articles, however, many new researchers only select articles that align perfectly with their research question. A student studying Women’s healthcare, for example, might overlook an article that discusses women’s access to birth control on the basis that it does not discuss women’s healthcare specifically. Consequently, students risk overlooking pertinent information if articles use different terms or phrasing than what the patron is searching for.

#### Strategy:

I try to help students identify the main claims of an article quickly. An article’s abstract, introduction and conclusion often contain the information needed to determine if the article is relevant. Additionally, explaining to students that their research interacts with existing investigations and builds upon the works of others, allows students to begin extrapolating from multiple resources to build their

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*...continued from page 23*

argument instead of searching for one perfect article that supports their view.

### **Challenge #3 - Formulating Research Questions**

Database searching and article evaluation overlap with formulating effective research questions. Sometimes students do not know what questions to ask for their research. Students may be instructed in class to research a topic on climate change. Students quickly realize, however, that when they search a database for “climate change” they are provided hundreds of thousands of articles – that is to say, their research topic is far too broad and needs to be reworked into a more specific question.

#### **Strategy:**

Showing students various ways to conceptualize their research helps with this process: PICO, for example, serves as a useful acronym for students to help identify the basic components of their research. Dividing a research question into the **p**opulation, **i**ntervention, **c**omparison, and **o**utcome allows students to identify their minimum search concepts and begin experimenting with search terms. The student may be interested in a specific population, period, or location, all of which gives the student new key terms to include in their searches to yield more specific results.

#### **Conclusion:**

In my experience, database instruction, article evaluation, and formulating research questions are the most common challenges students face when conducting research. Focusing on these three challenges, both in the library and in the classroom, will help produce a most robust, confident, and impassioned generation of researchers. ■



Having a variety of research strategies at the reference desk gives students an opportunity to develop, explore, and refine their research questions. The PICO strategy is most often used when refining sociological or health sciences research questions, but can be applied in broader terms to other areas of study.

## Population

**Who is being affected or studied?**

What is their age, location, or other distinguishing characteristics?

## Intervention

**What is being done?**

Is there a community program, government support, or other intervention?

## Comparison

**Are there similarities or differences with other groups?**

Are there benchmarks or other evaluations instead of an intervention?

## Outcome

**What is the result?**

Are there known/unknown outcomes, research, or other solutions?

Adapted by *The Teaching Librarian* from the University of Toronto's Gerstein Science Information Centre, Evidence-Based Practice Research Guide

Jennifer Brown

# Choosing Change

Choosing to leave a school is a privilege that is not available to all school library professionals but for Ontario College of Teachers contract staff like me, the option of seeking a new location and job assignment presents a yearly opportunity. I also happen to work in a large board so structures for internal movement are readily available. For a variety of reasons, I have considered this type of change since the spring of 2021. (But that is a story for another time.)

The challenges of leaving a library space and learning community that I hold so dear are not lost on me. As a full-time kindergarten to Grade 8 teacher librarian in a school that I helped create from its initial inception in 2015, the personal connections, the comfort of familiarity and the desire to see the work through could easily have held me in place. Co-constructing a library learning commons from scratch with the students we serve was a dream come true for me and that, in itself, is a huge privilege.

However, in my almost 25 years of teaching, I have learned to value the gift of leaving and embracing change. With this comes the opportunity to pause, reflect on the journey thus far, articulate my core pedagogical beliefs, and embrace a new school and role as a learning opportunity.

Looking back at social media posts, I deeply appreciate the digital archive that sharing our journey at Castle Oaks LLC through Twitter and Instagram has created. From our first empty shelves posts in November 2015 to the last non-pandemic start up in September 2019, I can see and even



feel the beauty of the child-centred learning community we co-created. I am not ignoring the two and a half school years impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in my reflection; so much of that time has limited my own imagination and restricted my ability to serve students in the way I truly believe we all should, so I'm pausing that part of the journey for now. (That is also a story for another time.)

This reflective digital dive reminded me that a library learning commons might begin with the shelves, the tables, the chairs, the computers and, of course, the books but at least two essential things are missing from that equation - the joy, enthusiasm and expertise of a school library professional and the identities, experiences and interests of the students, staff and families we serve.

What I noticed looking through the over 3600 tweets we posted from 2015 to 2022, was that the space, the materials and, indeed, the learning evolved and changed just as the children themselves grew and transformed each year. Though the images for this article are without students, it's evident that the library became a space that belonged to the students and adapted to their interests and inquiries.

I found that this reflection can help me during my transition to a new school and changing role. It would be very easy to stay in a nostalgic phase of this journey, get stuck on replicating the past and maybe get totally freaked out at the



idea of trying something new. I might also convince myself that I must reinvent every single idea in an effort to avoid any repetition of the last seven years.

Thankfully, the parameters of my new role and my own mindset make that risk of stagnation in my pedagogical practice nearly impossible. I am moving from a still relatively new school to a building established in the mid-1960s. There is an existing history and legacy that I must learn and critically unpack. My role is significantly different as I am leaving a full-time teacher librarian assignment for a half-time teacher librarian and half-time guidance educator position. The learning curve of the guidance role and the limitations of a half-time library allotment will push me to rethink my work each day. While the school is still a kindergarten to Grade 8 learning community, the population is about half the size of my previous school and that majority of the children travel by bus each day. Since our board encompasses three distinct municipalities (with many smaller, unique, fabulous communities housed within each), I have the gift of teaching in a new town, collaborating with a new public library system, finding new community partners and teaching in the broader community where I live with my own family.

Like my previous two library experiences, I am starting my new journey with the leadership and support of an administrator I love, admire and trust. I want to support her vision, her efforts to create a learning community centred on students and their families and her deep commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices. Having her there to push my thinking and challenge my practice is a gift in itself.

What I know is that my core beliefs about students and the importance of a thriving library learning commons have not changed:

- Kids matter more than books (or technology or anything else we spend money on).
- I will not ask anything of students that I do not ask of myself
- The library does not belong to me, but is it my job to care for it and curate its collection and learning environment in service of the children
- Policies and systems that are designed around adult convenience and comfort are not created to serve students

Saying goodbye isn't easy and for many reasons my exit in June did not go as planned. I know that the decision to leave and embrace the excitement of change is absolutely right and that the LLC and the students are in the incredibly capable hands of the new TL. The privilege of choosing change is one I deeply appreciate as I reflect on this transition.



I took one final selfie the day that I last spent time in the space (I am annoyingly notorious for embracing this trend) and posted one final social media update thanking everyone for their support along the way.

I am not sure what the next seven years will bring, but I know that I will continue to learn, let students lead the way, speak out in efforts to dismantle structures of oppression that continue to thrive in our education system and, hopefully, I will recognize when the time comes that I should once again choose change.

Feel free to visit @CastleOaksLLCs on Twitter and Instagram to see our digital archive, and, if you are curious, follow @CalCentralLLC on both to see where this new journey leads. 🍌

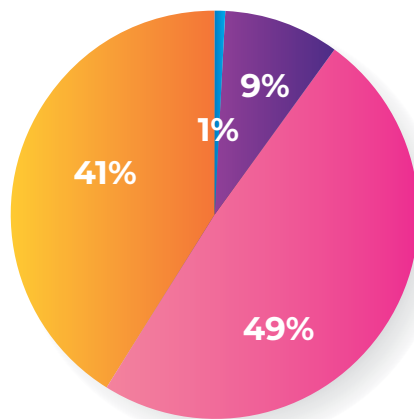


# ***The State of Elementary School Libraries (2021-22)***

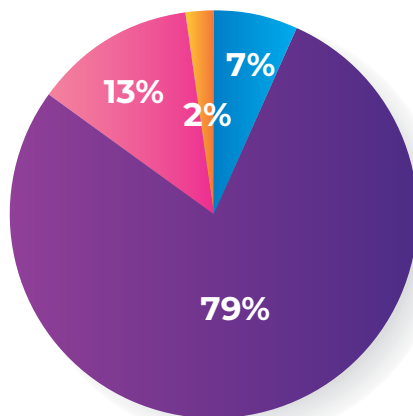
This infographic is based on data from People for Education's Annual Ontario School Survey 2021-22, the 25th annual survey of elementary schools in Ontario.

The elementary school data are based on 795 responses from 68 of Ontario's 72 publicly funded school boards, representing 20% of the province's publicly funded schools.

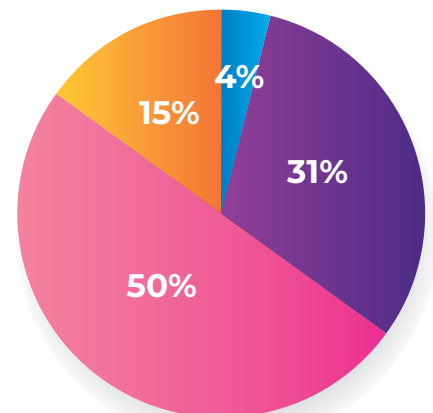
**Northern Ontario**



**Greater Toronto Area**



**Southwestern Ontario**

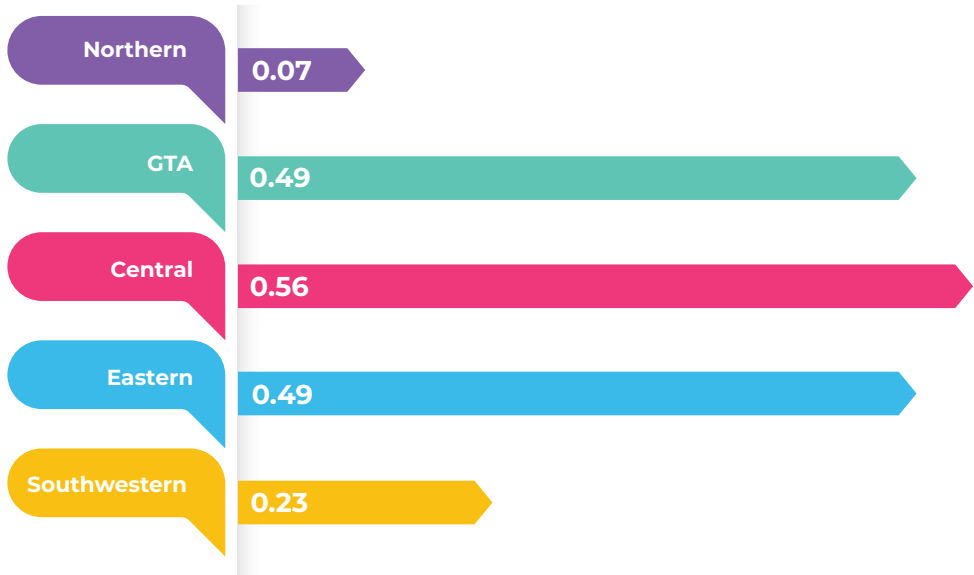


*Research and Graphic by: Sarah Roberts, MI*

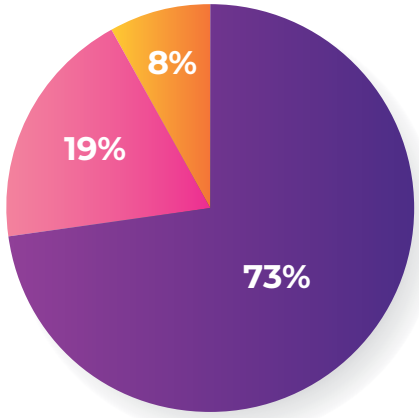
*Advocacy & Research Officer, OLA*



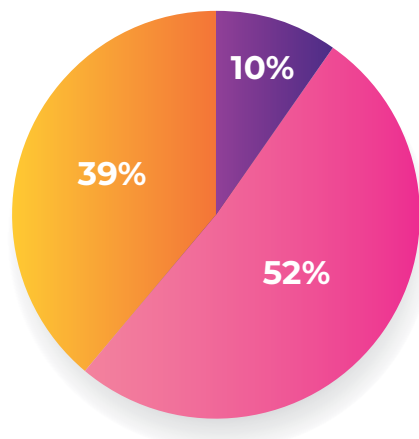
**Average Full-Time Equivalent  
of Teacher-Librarians  
Per School**  
(among all schools in the region)



**Central Ontario**



**Eastern Ontario**



**LEGEND**

- Schools staffing both teacher-librarian and library technician
- Schools staffing teacher-librarians only
- Schools staffing library technician only
- Schools staffing neither teacher-librarian nor library technician

# ECOO: Professional Learning for Ontario Educators

**H**ow do we empower and support educators in the use of technology in education during a time where so much is unknown? This question is continually explored by ECOO, the Educational Computing Organization of Ontario. ECOO started in 1979 and has evolved through the years to continually enhance student learning. Regional ECOOcamp emerged in 2017 in order to extend the experience of our annual Bring IT, Together! Conference outwards to coterminous school boards. In 2020, planning for the five regional summer ECOOcamp was consolidated as a virtual event during the pandemic as ECOOcamp Ontario 2020 as a way to continue this vision. Similar events in 2021 and 2022 have followed. The Support Series (Fall 2020, Winter and Spring 2021) was introduced as evening webinars to support educators in a variety of ways.

The ECOO Board of Directors meets virtually throughout the year. Our virtual meetings are very advantageous as ECOO members are scattered across the far reaches of Ontario. This meeting style is also used by ECOO and the Ontario Association of School Business Officials Information Communication Technology committee (OASBO-ICT) when planning ECOOcamp, Bring IT Together and Support Series events. For BIT, the goal is to “bring IT staff and educators together,” as we all work to support and empower educators to use technology to enhance student learning.

ECOO events are a great way for educators to share their learning, enhance their skills and knowledge, make contacts with educational partners and colleagues, hear fabulous keynotes, and, of course, collect some swag and door prizes! Our incredible sponsors and educational partners help us to run our events, both in-person and virtually. Participants can also revisit virtual sessions after the event (such as Support Series recordings, where previous professional development has been uploaded from our seasonal evening sessions) in the members-only section of the ECOO website. Our catalog currently captures over 250 virtual sessions that have been delivered at ECOOcamp, our ECOO Support Series, and #vBIT since August 2020.

School library professionals have always been a part of the online community building through a variety of sessions at ECOOcamp and BIT. Sessions such as book discussions,

makerspace ideas, virtual maker sparks, media literacy, podcasting and more have been topics for presentations at these events. Most recently, the topic of building a virtual Library Learning Commons to connect students and staff during online learning has been highlighted and continues to be an area of interest across Ontario school library professionals.

ECOO is continually seeking opportunities to support technology in the classroom year-round. We work hard to extend the connections educators make with one another as we seek new ways to support educators around the province. ■

## Connect with ECOO

On the web: [ecoo.org](https://ecoo.org)

Twitter: [@ecooorg](https://twitter.com/ecooorg)

Instagram: [@ecooorg](https://www.instagram.com/ecooorg)

Facebook: [Educational Computing Organization Of Ontario](https://www.facebook.com/EducationalComputingOrganizationOfOntario)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/ecoo-educational-computing-organization-of-ontario/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecoo-educational-computing-organization-of-ontario/)



Educational Computing  
Organization of Ontario

Organisation ontarienne pour  
la cybernétique en éducation

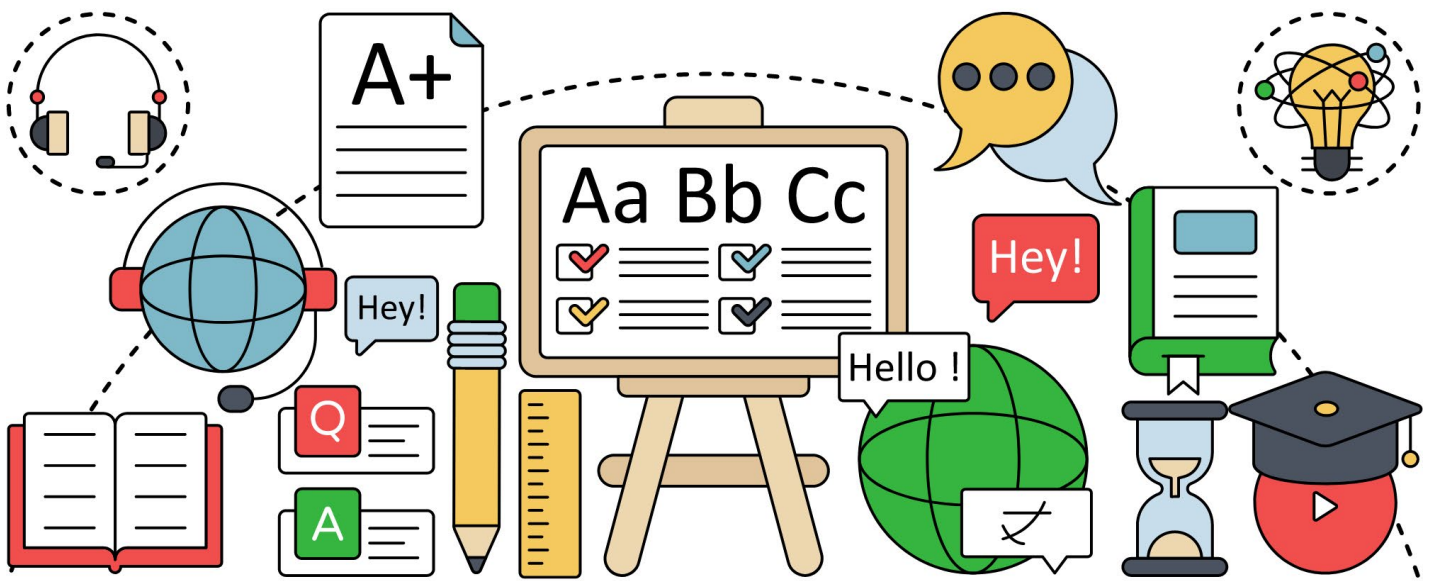
#ECOO

#ECOOcampON

#BIT

#SupportSeries

# Starting in September : Creating Inclusive and Welcoming Spaces for Students



**G**etting ready to reopen the library learning commons in September is always such an exciting time for me. I can't wait to welcome back our returning students, as well as invite our Grade 9s and other students that are new to the school into the space. It's important to me that students know that this is a space that all are welcome, they see themselves reflected in the space, and see that their voices have been heard in regards to how the library learning commons operates.

So what does this mean and what does it look like? Over the past few years, we have been reaching out to students formally and informally to ask them what they would like to see in the LLC. From books, to furniture, to technology and displays, we wanted to hear from our students about what they wanted and needed from us to not only feel comfortable visiting the space, but ways in which we could support their academic achievement. Once we got that feedback, we listened and got to work. Here are some of the ways we have used student voice and choice to make a more inclusive and welcoming space for students:

## 1. Celebrating student identities:

We have four large display boards in the LLC, two outside and we also maintain the display boards in the atrium. We use these to celebrate faith and heritage months and to educate students about the programs and services that the LLC has to offer. We also promote and highlight our print and digital collections, which are reflective of our student population. We have received very positive feedback from our students that the displays help to celebrate who they are and to educate them about faiths, cultures and heritages that they may have known very little about. They are changed each and every month as there are always new things to share!

## 2. Having a variety of spaces for learning and collaborating:

Whether they need a place to study, play a game or collaborate on an assignment, our LLC has a place for everyone. Study carrels, laptop bars, club chairs, couches and tables with seating provide students with a variety of distinct spaces to learn, work and play. Thanks to input from students, we added

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bean bag chairs to prevent students from sitting on the floor during busy times in the LLC and we are in the process of adding more couches in the seminar room to create a student lounge for our senior students.

### 3. Removing barriers:

We have been actively striving to eliminate barriers that would prevent students from wanting to come to the LLC. We removed library fines, lowered costs for printing and increased access to technology like Chromebooks, iPads, green screens, tripods, headphones, chargers and more. We increased our hours to allow students to come in early to finish work or to stay late. We offer peer tutoring for students who can't afford private tutoring and we have numerous opportunities for students to volunteer to get their 40 hours of service.

### 4. Activities for everyone:

Given the very diverse needs of our student population, we wanted to make sure that there were activities for anyone to engage in who needed a break, from the rigors of school and needed time to focus on their mental health. Therefore, we offer activities that are easily accessible to anyone, no matter

who they are. Colouring, Lego, puzzles, knitting, painting, play dough, origami, beading and more are available in the free flow makerspace and we have card and board games available for check out at the circulation desk. School can be stressful and students need a break too.

### 5. Supportive staff

I am fortunate to work with staff who are committed to continual and ongoing professional development to ensure that our programming and practices in the LLC are anti-racist, anti-oppressive, inclusive and equitable. We continue to grow and learn as a team and actively work to reflect on our practices to make changes where needed. Maya Angelou said **“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”** It's important for all of us to **“do better”**.

It has been a very difficult and challenging few years with the pandemic with a lot of upheaval and instability. We want to make sure that students have a welcoming space to go to when they need it. The library learning commons is that place for so many students and we want it to be that space for all students. ■

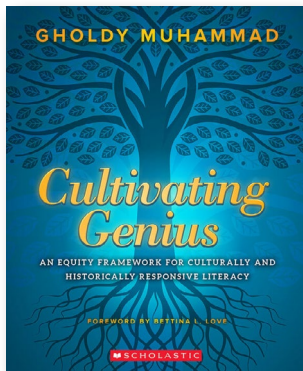


# Professional Resources: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

A significant focus of school libraries and classrooms has been on integrating meaningful equitable, diverse and inclusionary material into our educational spaces. Actively engaging students where they are and working on creating safe spaces for all members of our community to learn is not always an easy process, especially when you aren't quite sure where to begin. The following two resources help further develop our own learning regarding these topics, leading us on a path to better prepare ourselves and our students to talk about and fully engage with our lived realities and identities. Both resources provide meaningful and tangible resources for educators to begin (or continue) their professional learning and engagement with equity, diversity and inclusion.

## *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*

Ghouldy Muhammad | Scholastic, 2020



This accessible and applicable text is mostly designed for classroom educators, but contains valuable information and resources for school library professionals, as well. Muhammad takes inspiration from Black literary societies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for her historically responsive literacy (HRL) framework and provides a clear path towards historically responsive teaching and

education. The book is divided into three parts: the first part establishes and examines the fascinating and rich historical context and inspiration of the framework, the second part outlines the framework itself; and the third part explains ways to implement the framework in education. Although the book focuses on literacy, the term is broadly used, and this framework can be easily integrated into interdisciplinary learning environments, specifically a school library learning commons. Broken down into four areas, Muhammad's historically responsive framework looks at literacy as [understanding] identity, literacy as skills, literacy as intellect (or knowledge) and literacy as criticality. Each of these four areas are examined, contextualized, and applied with real-world examples in educational settings. Muhammad provides

leading and probing questions for educators and educational leaders, sample lessons and resources, and primary sources for her inspiration and reasoning. Throughout the book, Muhammad emphasizes the need for concrete pedagogical changes to successfully (and meaningfully) educate our youth. The framework she proposes, and the accompanying reasoning and resources, provide purposeful action and reaction to engage in our current socio-political educational system.

This book is incredibly rich with resources, mindful questions and powerful contextual material. Its writing style is clear, accessible, and well-cited. Despite the focus on American education, history, and youth, the book still provides meaningful and thought-provoking questions and plans to engage in historically responsive pedagogical practices. The framework can be applied in a variety of educational settings, and would be valuable to school library professionals who are interested in understanding and applying practices of historically responsive literacy in their libraries. Although the entire book is valuable to school library professionals, specifically Chapter 7, Selecting Historically Responsive Texts (where texts refers to material that can be read in a concrete and abstract sense), could be of particular interest.

## *Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics with Students*

Learning for Justice [formerly Teaching Tolerance],

[learningforjustice.org](https://www.learningforjustice.org)

Access: <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/lets-talk>



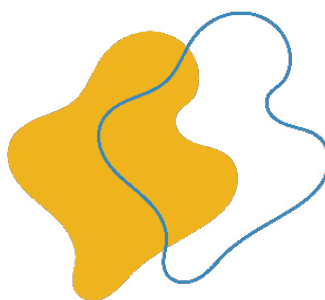
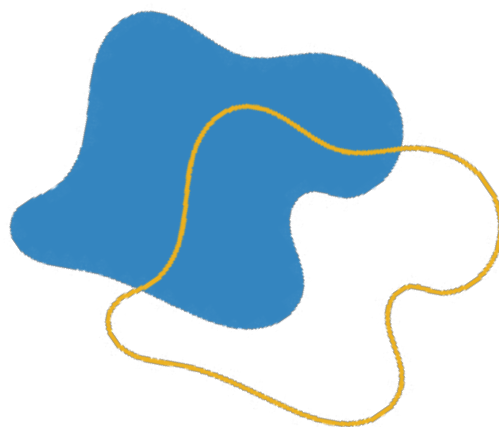
This resource specifically focuses on discussing race and racism in the classroom, but the overall framework can be applied to other topics and conversations regarding bias and oppression. This resource was created by Learning for Justice [formerly Teaching Tolerance], a magazine from the non-profit Southern Poverty Law Center. The text is relatively short, but focuses specifically on

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strategist and first steps to creating a culture of open, safe, and meaningful communication around racism and oppression.

The resource is divided into two sections. What makes this resource particularly helpful for educators and school library professionals is the clear and specific focus on unpacking out personal bias. The work this resource asks educators to do before beginning these difficult conversations is critical to the success of this pedagogy. Doing our work regarding bias and oppression sets the stage for students to do theirs. The second section goes through exercises and leading questions that can help students navigate the (sometimes uncomfortable) discussions regarding race, racism, and bias. It provides meaningful strategies for facilitating these conversations, and accessible activities to continue or reflect on the lessons. This resource is fairly short, but it provides a sound foundation and starting point for educators and school library professionals who are unsure where (or how) to begin. ■



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