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THE

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Who We Are

PAGE 10

A Place For Everybody

PAGE 26

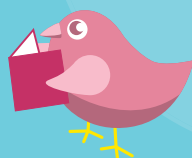
Helping Students Feel Seen

PAGE 28

THE
STATE OF
THE FOREST

PAGE 22

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THE Teaching Librarian

Volume 31, Issue 1 September 2023 ISSN 1188679X

TingL Fixtures

- 6** The Editor's Notebook
Kasey Whalley
- 8** President's Report
Johanna Gibson-Lawler
- 10** Origin Stories: Who We Are
Johanna Gibson-Lawler,
Wendy Burch Jones and Beth Lyons
- 12** Making Connections: For Everyone
Shelagh Straughan
- 14** Meet the Author: Marty Chan
Martha Brack Martin
- 16** Shelf Awareness
Lisa Noble
- 18** Celebrating Teaching Through Books
Carol Koechlin

TingL Features

- 22** The State of the Forest - The New
Look of an Established Canopy
Wendy Burch Jones and Ruth Gretsinger
- 26** Bellmoore's Library
Learning Commons:
A Place for Everybody
Jenn Angle
- 28** The Importance of School Libraries
Lisa Lewis
- 29** Libraries and Literacy
Brian J. D'Souza
- 30** How I Use Everything I Learned in Retail to
Help Me as a Teacher-Librarian
Jonelle St. Aubyn
- 31** Professional Resources
Kasey Whalley

everybody @ your library

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Volume 31, Issue 1



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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 (16th edition) or APA Style.

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TingL Submission Guidelines

Please Note: Themes are subject to change.

January 2024 V. 31, Issue 2	“Gaming @ Your Library” Deadline: October 15, 2023
May 2024 V. 31, Issue 3	“Joy @ Your Library” Deadline: January 30, 2024
September 2024 V. 32, Issue 1	“Community @ Your Library” Deadline: May 27, 2024

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*: teachinglibrarian@outlook.com.

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The Editor's Notebook

Happy September, everyone! When the editorial board and I began thinking about how we would like to welcome in the new 2023/2024 school year, we knew we wanted the articles of this issue to fully encapsulate the joy that library learning commons can bring to students, staff, administration, guests, parents, siblings... really, anyone else that crossed our thresholds.



We quickly realized that we wanted to focus on how the LLC is for everyone – and we mean *everyone*. Our articles for September build off the Readers' Rights articles of our May 2023 issue and are meant to help propel you into the new school year. When we think about welcoming spaces, inclusive programming and a haven for everyone, we want our communities to know that the LLC fulfils these roles.

Many educators are working incredibly hard to create these spaces and programs for our students, but there have been some terrifying challenges to this work, including book banning, staffing cuts, and the disregard for our library spaces. Despite the odds, there are still joyous and encouraging moments being experienced across Ontario

school libraries. This issue highlights some of the remarkable and practical work that is being done for and in the library learning commons.

There is something that I cherish about library spaces more than the potential discovery of a great book: I love that a good library is somewhere you can see yourself; in the pages of a book with a main character that looks like you, in the art or poetry by classmates displayed on the walls, in the pride sticker on the door to the teacher-librarian's office, in the self-directed calming activities left out for anyone to use, or in the religious book you cherish shelved in a place of honour with other sacred texts. School library professionals are often remarkable advocates for every student at every stage of their life.

The articles in this issue are written by educators that fully embrace the perpetuation of joy and learning in their spaces. I encourage you to read through the many stories presented here and reflect on how your library, even if it is a magnificent place, can ensure that every person who walks through your space knows they are valuable and welcome in that space.

May the 2023/2024 school year be wonderful.

Postscript

Gathering and reading the articles for this issue was a little bittersweet for me. The *Everybody @ Your Library* issue of *The Teaching Librarian* will be my last issue as Editor.

I've been working in school libraries since the beginning of my career but have recently taken a library position outside of a K-12 school. In addition to that, there have been some changes in my personal life that place a significant constraint on my volunteer work. This means that I can no longer commit the time to the magazine that it deserves. This was not an easy decision, and I hope to continue to support the magazine in other ways going forward.

I'd like to say thank you to the amazing team at OLA for supporting the magazine in any way we needed during the transition from Caroline to me. I appreciate the leadership and understanding that was offered to us while the editorial board and I dealt with the loss of an amazing leader and simultaneously worked on

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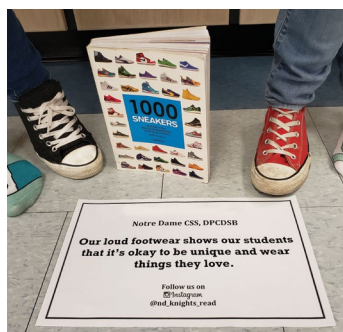


Kasey Whalley

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putting together a magazine that was worthy of her legacy. Thank you, Shelagh Paterson and the entire OLA team, for being your incredible selves.

I've been privileged enough to be the editor for two OSLA councils; Beth and Johanna are incredibly passionate about school libraries, and I'm so lucky to have read their wonderful President's reports before anyone else. Thank you and the entire OSLA council for being so dedicated and committed to creating spaces that matter for our students and for the contributions that make our magazine relevant, exciting and helpful.



The Teaching Librarian would be a thin pamphlet of information without the contribution of our authors. A massive thank you is in order for Anita, Shelagh, Lisa, Jonelle and Joanne for being a part of our committed contributors; your ideas and writing are so insightful and welcome. I'd also like to thank the dozens of other featured authors who have written for our magazine – thank you for sharing your ideas with the wider school library world.

The editorial board for *The Teaching Librarian* is one of the most remarkable groups of volunteers I have ever worked with, and I'm so grateful for their hard work, creativity and support. There is nothing that I could write here that would adequately explain how grateful I am for each of you. This magazine would not exist if you were not a part of it, and I hope that you recognize how valuable and extraordinary you are. Thank you, Angela, Kimberly, Tina, Martha, Mary and Trish. I hope we can continue to work together to help bring the stories of school libraries to as many people as possible.

It's crucial that I thank YOU, the reader. Our readership drives

our themes and our focus, and I am so grateful to be a part of something that helps school library professionals connect and innovate. I hope you continue to find new ideas and new collaborations between these pages. Thank you for being a part of our work.

Finally, I'd like to thank Caroline Freibauer for trusting me with this position during her illness. She was a remarkable leader, and I'm humbled and grateful to honour her work and legacy, even for a short while.

Reading about the wonderful work being done in Ontario school libraries and being involved in the fights against our challenges is something I love doing. Although I won't have my name at the top of the masthead, I hope to continue supporting and reading about the remarkable educators that are making our school libraries wonderful places. ■



President's Report

“

I encourage each of you to be brave, bold, and bodacious this school year with your book selections, your resistance to calls to ban books, and with reactions to criticism and challenges to your work.

”



As I sit down to write this report in June for the September 2023 edition of *The Teaching Librarian*, I am eager to share with you the work that OSLA Council has been undertaking, and to also share with you the future plans with the direction of our work moving forward within the larger OLA organization. Our theme for this edition is Everybody @ Your Library, and I think about our work in school libraries, providing a safe, equitable, and inclusive space where diversity is celebrated and seen as paramount. In this time of incredible divisiveness in our society, our students need us now more than ever! I cannot think of a time when our work matters more and, subsequently, our advocacy and involvement!

I am reminded of the work of Rudine Sims Bishop when speaking about children needing books that are mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors. Children need to see themselves represented in literature just as they are looking at themselves in a mirror. They also need to see characters in books represented that do not look like themselves, as in windows. Given the opportunity, children should step through sliding glass doors and interact with worlds that are different from those they are familiar with. Diversity, in this sense, goes both ways and includes everybody.

As school library professionals, we have known this concept for a long time, but we have been and will continue to be challenged

...continued on page 9



Johanna Gibson-Lawler

...continued from page 8

by some who disagree with this work. I encourage each of you to be brave, bold and bodacious this school year with your book selections, your resistance to calls to ban books, and with reactions to criticism and challenges to your work. Our students need you and the welcoming school library that you cultivate and nurture each and every day.

Your Ontario School Library Association has created a document to support you, administrators and school boards in this equity work. “A Guide to the Selection and the De-Selection of School Library Resources” will be released this fall and shared widely. This work could not have been possible without OSLA Council and some amazing former OSLA Councillors who saw this project through! I want to thank and acknowledge Beth Lyons (2022 OSLA President), Maureen McGrath (2020 and 2021 OSLA President), Melanie Mulcaster (OSLA Past Councillor), Cathy MacKechnie (OSLA Past Councillor), Karen Devonish-Mazzotta, Shelagh Paterson, and the OLA Staff for working so hard on this guide. It will provide tremendous support for you in your roles, especially if your board does not have a policy in place at this point.

This past May, OSLA offered a virtual professional learning opportunity with the marvellous Dr. ABC (Dr. Andrew B. Campbell). His session was entitled “The Changing Face of Your Classrooms: Being Intentional About Inclusion.” OSLA Council has intentionally continued our work with Dr. ABC and provided these sensational learning opportunities for our members over the last three years. OSLA Council typically engages in council book talks twice a year, and we’ve landed on Dr. ABC’s new book entitled “Stop the Hate for Goodness

Sake,” which he co-wrote with Larry Swartz for our fall book talk. This is my formal invitation to everybody to come and learn with us! We’re going to be working out the format, but we wanted to give you a chance to order your copy through the OLA Market Place and start reading.

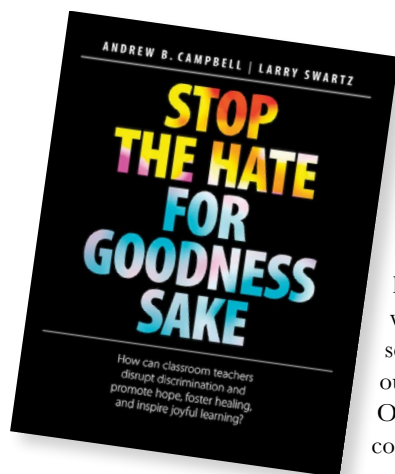
Along with our theme, as an association, it was imperative to include everybody who is our valued member. OSLA Council has unanimously approved the motion to create a new award entitled “School Library Professional of the Year,” and honours the important work of our school library technicians. Nominations for this new award, as well as the “Teacher-Librarian of the Year” and the “Administrator of the Year,” are currently open with a closing date of November 1st. Please see the OSLA website for further details and consider honouring an OSLA member today!

Finally, on the advocacy front, I would like to announce that OLA will be building upon the success of the OSLA’s #SchoolLibraryJoy campaign and will include the other sectors of OLA in this expanded campaign. Along with using #SchoolLibraryJoy, please include an additional hashtag of #LibrariesForLife or #bibliospourlavie. Now, each sector of OLA will also use this hashtag, along with an individualized one specific to their sector (e.g. #PublicLibraryJoy, #AcademicLibraryJoy, etc.). The goal is to demonstrate the value of libraries as lifelong institutions and to raise awareness of libraries through sharing positive stories from each library sector as a great advocacy tool.

I wish Everybody @ Your Library a beautiful school year, and please remember to be brave, bold and bodacious! ■

Johanna Gibson-Lawler

Johanna Gibson-Lawler
2023 OSLA President



Johanna Gibson-Lawler,
Wendy Burch Jones
and Beth Lyons

Origin Stories: Who We Are

The state of our libraries can't be told without digging a little deeper into who we are as the school library professionals that make our spaces ones that invite and inspire our readers. We are the ones who keep things running, the heartbeat in the hearts of our schools. Like many school library professionals, few of us are lucky enough to start our careers in these roles, so we thought we'd take the opportunity to get to know the stories behind our introduction to our life in the library. The first instalment of Origin Stories focuses on the President, Vice President, and Past President of our OSLA Council.

Treasures in Timmins - Johanna Gibson-Lawler

I was born in a small mining community called Timmins in Northern Ontario. Snow was typically on the ground from the end of October through to the beginning of May, and blackfly season was sandwiched in between. Every Saturday, my mother often took me to the Timmins Public Library to enjoy the children's programming and listen to storytime. I would spend considerable time carefully picking out my week's worth of library treasures. I can almost smell those books and would smile if I was the first to crack the spine of a brand-new book. My mother would be upstairs in the adult section doing the exact same thing. This was our Saturday morning tradition. Little would I know that this experience would lead me to teach and ultimately to follow my passion for being a teacher-librarian for my entire teaching career. I often lament and wonder why the experience of a student growing up in Timmins (no teacher-librarian) is so very different from a student growing up in Windsor or the GTA. This question has led me to the Ontario School Library Association, and I've been advocating ever since.



Timmins Public Library (circa 1980's)



Johanna Gibson-Lawler, OSLA President



Timmins Public Library (c. 2023) from <https://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/timmins-porcupine/timmins-public-library>

Following In Footsteps - Wendy Burch Jones

I've always loved visiting the library. I can still remember standing on the back of my little sister's stroller while my mom walked us to the old Memorial Community branch in Willowdale (long before it was a 4-story building adjacent to Mel Lastman Square). The children's librarians knew us by name and would set aside titles they thought I might like. By middle school, the library was my safe space, where I'd find refuge from an unkind world where I didn't always feel loved. When my mom returned to teaching after a long hiatus of being home to raise kids, she looked for a way back into the library - the role she'd left when she got pregnant with me 13 years prior. I was awed by what she did with her classes. My favourite days were ones she'd come home from book buying when she and my sister and I would sit with tea after dinner, reading through book after book and delighting in the new titles she had found for her school. Years later, when I went to a two-year part-time teacher's college program at Trent while I was working in event management and fundraising, my classmates lamented that "not everyone was raised by teachers, Wendy" when I suggested yet another what I thought to be "classic title" as an answer to a particular question. Sure, my parents (yep, Dad, too) were elementary school teachers, and I had fought the call to teach for nearly a decade. Yet here I was. And as soon as I was in my first classroom, I felt the pull to the library. I came up with excuses to chat with the teacher-librarian. I'd volunteer to do special projects with her and once used one of my beginning teacher days to go book buying with her. By my second school, I was sure. I wanted to be a teacher-librarian. I befriended the TL and paid close attention to her program. Only a couple of years later, at my next school, I joked with the TL there that should he

...continued on page 11

...continued from page 10

ever decide to retire, to be sure to let me know because I wanted his job! It was serendipitous. He whispered that he was planning to retire at the winter break. Gah! I quickly signed up for TL Part 1. And when the time came, I eagerly told my principal I wanted the job. One of my favourite memories is when I got to call my mom and tell her that I was finally following in her footsteps and was going to be a teacher-librarian. I'm not sure whose smile was bigger.

Serving school communities as a teacher-librarian is a dream come true. I ardently believe that students deserve to see themselves reflected in a story in every aspect of their intersectional identities. It is my job to help ensure students see themselves on the shelves, that they feel agency in the SLLC and understand it as a shared space, and that the SLLC stands as a brave and safe place for everyone to be themselves. I will fight for these things because they don't exist for all students. And they didn't always exist for me as a student. So I fight for her. And all the students who still don't feel safe. I am absolutely where I am supposed to be.



A little girl in big shoes from Google Images



Wendy Burch Jones, OSLA Vice President in the library at Dixon Grove Jr. Middle School

Full Circle - Beth Lyons, Past President

You could almost say that becoming a teacher-librarian was inevitable for me. I grew up next door to my aunt, uncle, and cousins, so close that our two houses shared a lawn, and my cousins and I would see which house was having the better dinner most nights and then choose where we ate. The best part for me was that my aunt was a teacher-librarian and an avid reader. My mom was also an avid reader. From an early age, I was immersed in book talks, book swaps and trips to the public library. I have always been surrounded by books, stories and people who love stories. When I started teaching, I was also very fortunate to work in schools with strong teacher-librarians who valued and facilitated collaborative learning. I started in middle school with a teacher-librarian who ran book clubs for the Forest of Reading and asked educators to join in as expert readers, and she promoted tech integration and use in our classrooms. When I moved to a K-8 school, I had the tremendous luck to work with Jenn Brown as the teacher-librarian. She introduced me to the idea of student voice in decision-making related to how the library was organized and she met with each grade level during our common planning times to ensure that we had the resources we needed to support classroom inquiries. When I moved to Larkspur, I spent three years teaching Grade 3 before being asked to take over the library space and transition it to the library learning commons model. The admin was incredibly supportive (budget-wise) with decision-making and creating a vision for the space. Being a teacher-librarian was an unbelievable 5 years of my career that I will cherish forever. The experience taught me many things about my pedagogical beliefs and best practices related to education. Still today, I continue to reflect on how my learning and growth from the teacher-librarian role is reflected in my teaching practice as I've returned to the classroom. In an amazing twist of fate, Jenn Brown & I both moved to Caledon Central P.S. last fall, and we once again get to collaborate, with her as the teacher-librarian and me as the classroom teacher.



Beth Lyons, OSLA Past-President in the library at Larkspur Public School

Do you have an origin story to share? We want to hear it! Send us your story at theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com. ■

Making Connections: For Everyone Everybody @ Your Library

A school library serves so many people with so many different needs. To mark this issue's theme of Everybody @ Your Library, here are just a few of the constituents who benefit from our attention, in no particular order.

Those who don't listen to announcements or read email

Credible information, scholarly information, our libraries are the source of it all – but what about the non-academic yet timely and critical stuff that many in our community need to know? We post the daily schedule in our high school library at our main desk.

While most students get into the swing of things by October, it's referenced often throughout the year (often by us!). When there is a special schedule, such as exam prep week or photo day, we put that up on either side of our front door; sometimes, it's a polished document, but often less glamorous (see photos). The goal is accurate, legible and timely information.

Daily Schedule for May 29-June 1	
8:15-8:45 Chapel	30 mins
8:45-9:30 Class 1	45 mins
9:35-10:20 Class 2	45 mins
10:25-10:45 Break	20 mins
10:50-11:35 Class 3	45 mins
11:40-12:25 Class 4 (per courses)	45 mins
12:30-1:10 Lunch 1	45 mins
12:30-1:10 Lunch 2	45 mins
1:30-3:00 Targeted Assistance Office Hours Workshop Activities Schedule events	

Monday May 29th - School Photo Day	
7:55 Chapel Choir	3:30 All students sign in HOH
8:45 Secretaries	5:30 Burns (2)
8:50 Prefects (2)	5:40 Scott (3)
1:10 Heads of Houses	5:50 Bethune (3)
1:15 Peer Support	6:00 Kelchum (3)
1:20 Dance Troupe	3:45 Golf
1:25 Rock Band	3:50 Bigside Golf
1:30 Trivly Brings	3:55 Middlesex Girls Soccer
1:35 Wind Ensemble	4:00 Bigside Girls Soccer
1:40 Jazz @4	4:05 Middlesex Girls Rugby
1:45 Grade 9 band	4:10 Bigside Girls Rugby
1:50 Johnson Ringers	4:15 Littlesex Boys Rugby
1:55 Drumline	4:20 Bigside Boys Rugby
2:00 BREAK	4:25 Track and Field
2:05 Brent (1)	4:30 Bigside Track and Field
2:10 Bickie (2)	4:35 Bigside Boys Baseball
2:20 Wright (2)	4:40 Girls Softball
2:30 Orchard (1)	4:45 Littlesex Badminton
2:40 Rigby (2)	4:50 Bigside Badminton
2:50 Hodgetts (2)	4:55 Girls Tennis
	5:00 Boys Tennis
	5:05 Bigside Ultimate
	5:10 Bigside Rowing
	5:15 Rowing

Those who are hungry

Whether or not your schools offer breakfast or breakfast programs or have students who choose sleep over their morning meal, the library can be a place where kids come to grab a snack if your budget allows. We fill up our fruit basket every morning, and it's often depleted by mid-afternoon; the attached photo was taken at noon. Bananas are the most popular, hands down.



Those who are part of the extended community

I don't think our high school library is unique in getting requests for children's materials from time to time. Whether for young families living on campus or our students tutoring young kids from our local

REGULAR DAY		SHORT DAY (Wed & Thurs Break)	
8:45-9:50	Period 1	8:45-9:50	Period 1
9:55-10:25	AA	9:55-10:25	Break on Wed AA on Thurs
10:30-11:35	Period 2	10:30-11:35	Period 2
11:40-12:45	Per. 3 (SR)	11:40-12:45	Per. 3 (SR)
11:40-12:30	Lunch 1 (JR)	11:40-12:30	Lunch 1 (JR)
12:35-1:40	Per. 3 (JR)	12:35-1:40	Per. 3 (JR)
12:50-1:40	Lunch 2 (SR)	12:50-1:40	Lunch 2 (SR)
1:45-2:25	Flex (except Wed)	1:45-2:50	Per. 4 Break Thurs End 2:25pm
2:30-3:35	Period 4		

...continued on page 13

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community, we've had a number of picture and chapter books on hand for years.

Earlier this school year, two members of our library team decided to formalize and expand this collection and did so by harnessing the power of [Week Without Walls](#) (WWW), an annual event when students and staff perform volunteer service in our area, including some sites on campus.

One month prior, a team member emailed staff & posted a notice in the parent newsletter asking for donations of books suitable for up to 12 years of age; 10 families donated a total of 203 books.

When the week arrived, four students were assigned to this WWW group based on their shared passion for reading & children, and over the course of eight hours:

- Reviewed donations (a handful of books didn't make the cut based on physical condition and appropriateness)
- Created a variety of materials to support the collection, including identification stickers (items aren't barcoded, so the stickers highlight where they are to be shelved) and dividers noting their creative and unique categories, such as "Kids in Charge" and "Interactive" (pop-up books and I Spy), "Guide for Life", along with some traditional genres.
- Colourfully painted book ends and created bookmarks that celebrate and encourage reading

Initially, the students were keen to catalogue the books so that they'd be searchable in our database, but time didn't allow for this, although it was great to have students get a glimpse of how much goes into this detailed behind-the-scenes work.

I'm grateful to work with colleagues who created such a meaningful initiative for our students and for students who enthusiastically embraced the opportunity!



Those who love to read

To be honest, our students are so busy, it's amazing any of them make time to read for fun at all! While supporting all people on the reading continuum, let's acknowledge and celebrate our avid readers. Last year, I formally interviewed one of my Grade 11 students who had completed a personal reading challenge of reading 52 books in 52 weeks. Here are some highlights from an article published in our school newsletter:

Reflecting on her experience, she says, "I'm relieved that it's over, but I'm so happy that it happened. I knew I was testing my limits and am glad to know it was possible." It seems that the challenge was an experiment of sorts. She didn't really expect it to actually happen or to continue for so long! Having fallen out of the reading habit and finding herself wasting too much time, she thought aiming to read a book a week for one year could be fun. The timing was fortuitous; it turned out to be a welcome distraction during the pandemic. Once she started, she realized that she hadn't thought it through; the beginning was challenging to the point that she didn't think she could stick with it. Perhaps starting with a 700+ page book was a poor choice, though!

However, she found her groove after the rough start. Her key to success was making the most of all available time, between classes, during break, after school and before sports. "It got really hard when school started back on campus – I had to really schedule my time." After a while, it became a habit; it didn't feel like homework; it was just second nature. She found it interesting that some people thought the weekly challenge meant that she was limited to shorter books, but that wasn't the case – she just had to plan carefully for longer titles.

"I have so much more time than I thought I had!" And she was surprised to discover that she really loves longer books because you get completely immersed in a story (both fiction and non-fiction): "Reading is transformative ... you take experiences from your own life and put them into another life. Reading 52 books is like living 52 lives." Overall, while she didn't think she would make it through the full year, it turned out to be "a great way to discover my interests and see what books I like." She didn't tell many people about the challenge for fear she would fail; then, because she didn't want to look like she was bragging. Good thing her librarian is here to do the bragging for her!

I feel fortunate to work in an area of the school that offers the opportunity for flexibility and creativity, allowing me to serve and advocate for everybody using the library in a meaningful way. I hope you have the same opportunity at your school. ■

Meet the Author

Marty Chan

Martha Brack Martin



Marty Chan is a true literary Renaissance artist. He not only writes novels for young adults and children, but he is a highly successful playwright, has appeared regularly on television and radio, and is currently offering appealing and informative online workshops and storytelling sessions. In May, he hosted a webinar for 1600 students where he shared Chinese folk tales to celebrate Asian Heritage Month. Marty is a winner of the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration 2022-2023 Pinnacle Award, a recognition that highlights exceptional interactive and engaging virtual learning programs (<https://www.cilc.org/pinnacle>).

TingL: Hi Marty!

Marty Chan: Hello!

Children's literature is thankfully becoming much more diverse than it ever was before. How did you feel when you first saw the "We Need Diverse Books" movement?

For me, it was a welcome addition. Growing up, I lived in a small town. The library collection was pretty minimal, and I never saw myself reflected in any of the books that were on the shelves. No fault to the librarian; those were the books that were available. I tried hard to read and inject myself into the books, like any reader does, right? Trying to imagine yourself as the protagonist. But I always knew there was something not quite fitting when I tried to put myself in the shoes of those protagonists. And I think when we

started to see that movement towards having more representation and more diverse characters, it was a relief because it felt like the world exists beyond a certain narrow viewpoint. I actually *matter* as a reader – as somebody who has a Chinese Canadian background. There is a place in the world for someone like me. And to me, that was a huge difference.

Do you think that's helped draw attention to your work?

For a large part, it has. In the publishing industry, any attention you can draw to your work helps. Having a movement like that helped my books, and works by other authors, get noticed.

Your hit play, *Mom, Dad, I'm Living with a White Girl*, is based on your own life. Your first novel, *The Mystery of the Frozen Brains*, features a Chinese protagonist who feels differently because he and his family don't look like everyone else in his Albertan hometown. Do you feel a responsibility to include your Asian heritage in your writing, or is it just a natural progression of who you are?

I think it's a natural progression. I've written stories that have non-Asian protagonists, and it's just – that's what the story needed. In my series, *The Ehrich Weisz Chronicles*, the story is about Harry Houdini teaming up with Nicola Tesla, so the characters had to be Caucasian. If the cultural background of the character doesn't matter, then I go, "why not an Asian character?" It really depends on the story.

You've recently been writing for young adults who consider themselves reluctant readers. These hi-lo (high interest, low vocabulary) novels in the Orca Currents series are yet another way you've supported inclusion in Canada's kid-lit field. How did you make that migration to hi-lo books?

It was a really easy transition to make. Someone from Orca emailed me and said, "We like your writing. Would you like to write for us?" I love writing for that particular demographic because *I* started off as what they would have termed a reluctant reader. My parents

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were immigrants from China. My dad could speak English and read English, but he bought a grocery store, so he had no time to sit down with me and help me read. And my mom could barely speak English, and she definitely couldn't read English, so when I went to school, I was a couple of reading levels behind; I remember it was the school librarian who helped me. At the time, the only thing that I liked was comic books. I would smuggle in my *Archie Digest Comics* and flip through them in class. I couldn't read them, so I couldn't figure out exactly what was going on, but the librarian saw my comics and instantly picked up on how to get me reading. She said, "How would you like to learn how to read your comics?" We started reading, and the world opened up because I realized the pictures were only telling one part of the story. And within a very short time, I was able to read on my own, and by grade 3 or 4, I was the kid who was going to the library to get a new book every day.

This issue of *The Teaching Librarian* magazine is focused on Everybody @ Your Library. You were Writer in Residence in a number of libraries. What role do you think libraries and librarians can play in making a school feel more inclusive and welcoming to everybody?

I think they can make a *huge* difference for kids. I'll share a quick story with you. A few years ago, I got an email from a librarian in a rural school in Alberta. She mentioned that she'd brought my *Marty Chan Mystery Collection* into her library and how it helped one of the students. A Korean family had just come to the town, and their son was feeling out of place because they were the only Korean family – basically the only POC family – in that town. The kids picked on him, and when she saw what he was going through, she introduced him to my books.

In the books, I talk about what it's like to be the only Chinese kid in the school, and all the problems that I went through and how I overcame them. And she said the books changed him. He went from being this introverted kid who wasn't fitting in to suddenly being more confident and feeling like he wasn't alone. His confidence grew, and the kids accepted him. And I thought that's the difference a librarian with the right book can make.

That's the difference that including diverse books in your collection can make. Because then the kids who don't feel represented feel that they *do* matter.

Besides being a Writer in Residence in libraries in Alberta, you were also the first Playwright in Residence in Edmonton's Citadel Theatre. What did you take away from all those experiences?

One of the great things about being a Writer or a Playwright in Residence is you get a chance to give back to the community, but you also get a chance to plug into the community, to see where people are at and what's important to them. And it's amazing how important writing is to people...getting their story out. It reminded me how important it is to value every person's story. That's one of the things I love about the library. It's a repository for all those

different stories that people can access.

Speaking of different stories...Do you have a particular genre you enjoy writing the most, or is that like asking someone if they have a favourite child?

I love to make people laugh, and I love to make people scream. So, if I can find a hybrid of funny and scary, that would be my perfect pocket in terms of writing. Even when I write something like *Haunted Hospital*, I always try to find a moment of humour in there because I think it adds more dimension and allows me to bring some humanity to any work that I do. If people can laugh, they can identify with what's going on.

What message do you hope to leave with young readers when they finish your books?

I think the message that I want the kids to walk away with is, "I want to revisit that world." My hope is that I've created a world that the kids have enjoyed spending time in and would like to spend more time in. It comes back to when I was a kid. When I got past the *Hardy Boys* and started getting into *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, those were worlds that I wanted to revisit. And it's a great feeling, right? Like when you're a kid, and you visit Disneyland. I feel like books are the reading version of Disneyland. They transport you to a world that you can go and revisit anytime, whether it's in your memory or by rereading the book.

That's a great metaphor! And I guess that means library staff are the travel agents for all those fictional worlds and stories. I love that idea! Here's hoping you make many more books with worlds that kids want to revisit. Our kids need that now more than ever. Thanks for chatting, Marty.

You can learn more about Marty Chan and where you can purchase his fabulous books for children and young adults on his website: martychan.com !



Shelf Awareness

Welcome back to school, everyone. Hopefully, we're surrounded by those last lovely warm days and feeling excited about the school year to come. I don't know about you, but I've often found that puts me in a little bit of an odd place emotionally. I'm always excited about the start of the year and the new start it brings. At the same time, I'm still thinking about holidays and hammocks.... With that vibe in mind and this issue's theme of Everybody @ Your Library, here we go!

Warrior Girl Unearthed
Angeline Bouley
Henry Holt and Company, May 2023

One way to reflect Everybody @ Your Library is to make sure we continue to work on the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, particularly those connected to education. Call to Action 63, iii, calls for "building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect." As teacher-librarians and teachers, the titles we invite our learners (and colleagues into) can make a difference on this one.

Angeline Bouley amazed most readers in 2021 with *Firekeeper's Daughter*, about a young mixed-race (Anishinaabe-kwe and white) living on the American side of the Soo. She created dynamic characters who invited us into their modern lives in all their messiness and also gave us a banger of a thriller. In the process, she dealt with the culture of sexual assault that has existed in women's sports at the collegiate level for a long time, as well as the opioid epidemic. If that book isn't in your collection, get on it.

I had no idea how Bouley was going to follow up *Firekeeper's Daughter*, but she did it, and how! Perry is one of the twin nieces of *Firekeeper's* main character (and yes, Auntie Daunis is here, don't worry, but readers do NOT have to have read the previous book to get pulled into this one). She is one heck of a spark plug main character.

The story takes place the summer after Grade 10, so students who are feeling the need to think about their summer might happily dive into this one. Perry just wants to spend the summer being a slacker, fishing with her dad, and helping in the garden. An unfortunate encounter with a bear leaves her in debt to her aunt for damage to a vehicle, and she is taken on as an intern by the local

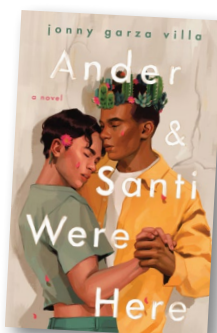
historian in charge of repatriating sacred artifacts and ancestors' remains to the community. Perry finds herself fascinated by the subject, and that eventually leads her to plan a heist in order to bring those items, and people, home.

Again, there is a lot of tough, tough stuff here, including a plotline around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2 Spirit People, but there are also HUGE amounts of learning and laughter and joy and even some romance! Perry's Anishinaabe and Black identities are who she is. She speaks Ojibwemowin regularly throughout the book and offers semaa as she takes the ferry across the river because that's what a modern traditionalist, learning from her elders, would do. One of the gifts of Bouley's book is the ability to help students without a context for modern Indigeneity understand that First Nations cultures continue to thrive today. When we teach the hard truth of residential schools, it is also extremely important that we underscore the resilience of Indigenous communities, who not only survive but thrive.

Angeline Bouley writes incredible thrillers that are totally current, utterly inclusive, AND give me all the feels. It's an art form. The twists that finish this one off are breathtaking. Another way in which the book can fit into Everybody @ Your Library is its availability in multiple forms. I listened to the book, and it was so good that I am now relistening, even after having read the book in print. This, for me, was the summer book of '23.

What will your students enjoy?

Laughing at Perry's dog's toxic farts, getting caught up in the joy of a summer romance with a gorgeous guy, the amazing character of Shense, who is a strong teenage mom who joins Perry's group of misfit friends. There is so very much to love in this book.



Ander and Santi Were Here
Jonny Garza Villa
St Martin's Press/Wednesday Books, May 2023

I loved this book.

I needed that to be my first line because I am still spending time with Ander and Santi in my head, ages after I finished the book. This is an epic love story which I genuinely wasn't expecting going in. It's about finding your person unexpectedly and utterly and giving yourself up for that.

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Ander is the queer, non-binary older child of a loving Tejano family. Their much-loved abuelita runs a fabulous taqueria and also stays up late cheering on her favourite teams. Their parents and sibling simply understand that Ander is who Ander is. There is no trauma around this part of Ander's world, and that makes such a difference in their story. To be loved by one's family, as one is, is a powerful gift, and Jonny Garza Villa captures that perfectly in this story. This was one of the first novels I have come across where there is family conflict, worked through with love and care, but it has nothing to do with a queer character's sexuality or gender identification. If one of our goals is to help everybody see themselves on our shelves, being able to share a book where a queer character is simply loved by their family? That's such a powerful thing.

Ander is home in San Antonio, taking an extra year after high school to work at the taqueria and taking commissions to do local murals to help solidify their skills before heading to art school the next fall. One day, they notice a very cute character taking selfies in front of one of their murals. To Ander's surprise, the cute selfie-taker ends up working at the taco place, and despite very solid warnings to the contrary from their family, Ander falls **hard** for the adorable Santi. Like "fall down a rabbit hole, never come back" hard. Like love you never recover from.

Santi is an illegal immigrant, and Ander's family is helping him by having him work at the taqueria and put money away to be able to bring his sister and mom to join him. The tension of always having to keep one eye out for ICE officials is brilliantly conveyed in the book. The cast of characters who work to help keep Santi safe is amazing, and you come to love them as much as you love the two main characters.

This is a gorgeous, lush story. It's also raunchy and sexy and real and painful.

There are a lot of thoroughly inappropriate insults flying around in Spanish. That's hard to avoid when a bunch of the main characters are 18-year-olds living life to its fullest. The raunchiness and laughter and truth do not detract from the beauty of the story, but you need to know it is there. Read this one. Grab it for your senior students. They'll thank you for it.

What will your students enjoy?

The beautifully rendered love story, the hilarious banter between friends, the unexpected ending. Expect more than a few Kleenexes to show up.

Paper Planes

Jennie Wood

Mad Cave/Maverick, July 2023

I waffled A LOT as I tried to figure out what my third book should be for this column. The other books in the running, in case you're interested in tracking them down, were *The Renaissance* of Gwen



Hathaway (Ashley Schumacher) and *Missing Clarissa* by Ripley Jones. They may yet find their way into a column, but I wanted to get a graphic novel in here. I found over the past two years that a huge chunk of my Grade 7 and 8 library users were there for the manga and the graphic novels, so if we are looking to reach as many readers as possible, visual storytelling is one big way to do it.

Leighton and Dylan screwed up. Bigtime. So, Leighton and Dylan are spending the summer at a camp for troubled teens. If they "pass" the course, they can return to their own school community in the fall. If they don't, things will look a lot different.

Paper Planes takes us back through the origins of Dylan and Leighton's relationship (I don't think I can call it a friendship – it's messy) and moves back and forth through time, eventually making its way to the event that sends them to camp. For me, this made the narrative choppy because the flashbacks weren't always linear. We learn a fair amount about both of them, and the central motif of the two of them sending messages by paper plane is firmly established. Dylan identifies pretty early as non-binary, and when Leighton is being honest, which is really, really hard for her, she admits that she sees herself as asexual. Unfortunately, that is not a place her family and privilege will allow her to inhabit publicly.

Visually, the book is beautiful. Lettering (Micah Myers), visuals and colour (Dozerdraws) are well done, and students in Grades 7 and up will be attracted to this original graphic novel. The writer based the story on her own experiences growing up. The dynamic between the characters and the generally unhealthy relationship that Leighton's denial, combined with her very privileged family, creates for Dylan was hard for me to be okay with as an adult reader, and it's part of why I waffled on including this title. I spent a fair amount of the book wanting to yell at Dylan to "Run away! Run very, very far away!"

I think that students will probably be able to get past that problem with the book because they will be able to identify more with the characters than I can. I need to give major props to author Jennie Wood for not taking the easy way out in any way here. The characters have to figure a lot out, and she doesn't give them easy solutions or cutesy happy endings. That's one strength of the book. It will be very interesting to see who students identify with. The book would be great for a facilitated book club that wanted to wrestle with the characters and the relationships.

What will your students enjoy?

The colour palette of the book, which draws the reader in; the avoidance of a neat ending; some realistic depiction of different socio-economic situations, without identifying one as "better" than the other.

I leave you with hopes that your September rollout goes smoothly and that you have lots of time to track down your own great titles to help Everybody @ Your Library find themselves in a book. Let me know what your students are reading. ■

Celebrating *Teaching Through Books*

Carol Koechlin



<https://teachmag.com/teaching-through-books>

This article originally appeared in the Spring 2023 edition of Canadian School Libraries Journal and is shared with permission.

Canadian School Libraries is proud to share our second Canadian book project. [Teaching Through Books](#) is just as exciting as [The Great Canadian Book Project](#). Again we are able to present a rich collection of videos and lesson plans for educators to help them engage learners in important topics through the exploration of excellent current Canadian books. We now have nearly fifty lessons and hundreds of books featured between the two projects. Canadian School Libraries thank our partners at [TEACH Magazine](#) for their support in creating these amazing resources, with funding from the [Canada Book Fund](#).

Teaching Through Books addresses diversity and inclusion, explored through eight important themes:



undermines and harms people living with diverse abilities and disabilities, and impacts society as a whole by continuing harmful stereotypes and over-generalizations that devalue and perpetuate discrimination.

Ableism.

Ableism refers to the attitude and underlying social prejudice of assuming that all individuals can, or should, be able to do things in the same way. Ableism



texts that focus on the lived experiences of a broader global community can help students to better understand their learning community, and by focusing on the theme of allyship, we can work to intentionally build a more inclusive society.

Allyship. In learning about ideas of allyship, students are able to connect to their own identity and the identities of others.

Reading and exploring



practices that uphold the power of some and systematically deny it from others.

Anti-Racism.

Anti-racism is the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism by challenging the systems, structures, policies, and



call Canada and our moral imperative to move forward with the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As readers connect with stories by Indigenous storytellers, they are also working to connect to the land on which they live, work, and play.

Indigenous Voices

Exploring, sharing, and discussing stories about the lives, joys, and experiences of Indigenous peoples is important as it relates to the land we now



resulting in positions of advantage or disadvantage.

Intersectionality.

Intersectionality describes a conceptual understanding that various aspects of a person's identity can create internal and external tensions,

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Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is a growing issue in Canada and other countries, resulting in hurt and harm to members of the Muslim community.

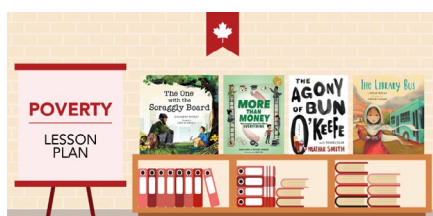
Learning about Islam and Muslim culture can help break down stigma and stereotyping against Muslim people and stop anti-Muslim hate.



Mental Health.

Stigma around mental health continues to prevent those who are trying to cope from getting the help that they need. In addition,

there are many barriers to accessing services that deal with mental health issues. Identifying mental health issues and having knowledge of resources and supports can help address this serious and growing problem among young people today.



Poverty.

Poverty refers to a lack of money to acquire basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. It is something that affects many

families in Canada. Poverty can create cyclical inequities in all aspects of life, including health care, education, where you live, and how you feel about yourself.

Themes are introduced by informative short videos where members of the CSL writing team – teacher-librarians and other educators

from across the country, profile the highlights of each theme.

The videos also introduce many of the featured books, and make connections to learning opportunities. Each theme is supported by a document containing 3 separate lessons designed for students in Elementary (K-4), Middle School (5-8), High School (9-12). Creative learning provocations engage students in rich reading activities, extensions for making and tinkering, and culminating ideas for reflection and making connections. They also suggest more great Canadian books and resources to enrich the teaching around these themes. Each theme document is also available in PDF format to make saving, sharing and printing easy.

We have been able to enrich this second project by featuring many Canadian books available in French and in English. French titles are marked with an *. We hope this addition will be helpful to educators who seek ways to provide French language learners with joyful, authentic experiences through story.

We would also like to call attention to the learning goals for lessons. Because of our desire to offer the best possible books and lessons to address diversity and inclusion issues, we looked to the work of Dr. Gholdy Muhammad to help focus learning.

Dr Gholdy Muhammad has developed an equity framework for learning called, Historically Responsive Literacy Framework. Using this framework goals are set for: Identity, Skills, Intellectualism, Criticality and Joy. Together these goals ensure that students are making deep connections and being introspective at the same time.

The framework was designed with Black students in mind, but it will benefit all students. Muhammad explains it this way: “*If we start with Blackness (which we have not traditionally done in schooling) or the group of people who have uniquely survived the harshest oppressions in this country, then we begin to understand ways to get literacy education right for all.*” (Gonzalez, J., 2020. [Historically Responsive Literacy: A More Complete Education for All Students](#). *Cult of Pedagogy*.)

...continued on page 20

Historically Responsive Literacy Framework by Dr. Gholdy Mohammad

Learning Pursuits	Teacher Planning Questions
Identity	How does the curriculum (including texts and exercises) help students to learn something about themselves and/or about others?
Skills	How does the curriculum (including texts and exercises) respond to or build students' skills and standards?
Intellect	How does the curriculum (including texts and exercises) respond to or build students' knowledge and mental powers? What are they becoming smarter about?
Criticality	How does the curriculum (including texts and exercises) engage students' thinking about power and equity and the disruption of oppression?
Joy	How does the curriculum (including texts and exercises) impart happiness in learning something new?

Learn more about equity frameworks for teaching [here](#).

How to Make the Most of This New CSL Resource

These lessons and videos were prepared by our team of school library professionals to promote the use of excellent Canadian authored children's books as catalysts for teaching a range of often difficult topics. School library professionals already do an exemplary job of introducing books to their students and promoting independent selection and the reading habit. **No one else in the school takes on this important challenge with quite the same love and creativity.** Face-to-face and virtual book read-alouds, book talks, book tastings, and displays are very important and should not change. However, what these lessons and videos do is offer further opportunities for teaching and learning.

- Use the videos as inspiration for co-planning a new lesson/unit, especially a difficult topic
- Use the lessons as they are or as models for co-planning/teaching and assessing.
- Make your own copy of Melanie Mulcaster's [planning guide template](#) or design new inquiry lessons, spark Genius Hour activities, focus a Maker activity, create an arts extension etc.
- Share the dual French/English titles and lessons with French language teachers.
- Use the featured books and further recommended titles to inform new resource purchases.
- Make use of the lists in the lessons of additional Canadian books on this theme to expand differentiated learning opportunities.
- Print off a lesson of interest to share with a staff member.
- Share videos with new teachers in their orientation to the library learning commons.
- Use the videos and lessons in professional learning courses you lead. **I**

This was truly a team effort. We wish to formally acknowledge the expertise and enthusiasm of each and every educator who helped create this valuable resource.

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Telling Tales
Celebrating 15 Years of Stories



**Saturday September 16th &
Sunday September 17th**
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Hendrie Park



15th Annual Telling Tales Festival

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FREE with registration | Ages Tots to Teens

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Wendy Burch Jones and Ruth Gretsing

The State of the Forest - The New Look of an Established Canopy

According to an article from science.org, it was thought that when a fire swept through a forest or a lumber company stripped an area of all its trees, the greenery would eventually grow back. Studies show that second-growth forests can look very different from what they replaced. In its post-pandemic iteration, the Forest of Reading®, an established canopy with a rich history as a literary festival in Ontario, is not quite full of the leafy grove of timbers we are accustomed to seeing. And maybe that's okay.

Since 1996, the Forest of Reading® has celebrated the joy of reading, encouraging readers of all ages to engage with Canadian titles and creating opportunities for the reluctant to discover a love of reading. With the help of hundreds of volunteers who carefully curate nine different lists to celebrate Canadian books, publishers, authors, and illustrators, this year we had 97 nominated authors and illustrators for 70 books across our English program (Blue Spruce, Silver Birch Express, Yellow Cedar, Silver Birch, Red Maple, White Pine, and Evergreen) and 52 authors and illustrators for 30 books across our French program (le prix Peuplier, le prix Mélèze, and le prix Tamarac).

But before they are nominated, the Forest begins with our selection process. Over 100 volunteers from the OLA, across nine different Selection Committees – one for each of the Forest of Reading programs or “trees,” begin reading hundreds of books just after the previous year's nominees are announced. Pre-pandemic, this reading happened with hard copies, but we have since shifted to PDFs. This has the benefit of not needing to ship physical books and also makes more books available to more committees, especially for those titles “on the cusp” (i.e., books that could be nominated in two different programs). Many find the PDFs harder to read, however, and some committee members have taken to searching out published books in bookstores to get an idea of their physicality to nail down the best fit. Each committee also has virtual meetings during the reading process and for final selection. This has been an incredibly positive shift to the selection process as discussions can be more frequent and connected than teleconference. Overall, more people are reading more books, and the Forest of Reading can only become stronger for it.

There are signs of growth in running Forest of Reading® programs as well. The program's success is rooted in the hundreds of teachers and teacher-librarians who champion it. With over 270,000 participants, including 50 schools participating from out-of-province, the Forest of Reading® is easily Canada's largest recreational reading program.



FOR display in the District School Board of Niagara.

Amy Johnston, a Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) library technician, moved to a new school with no Forest history two years ago. “[It] can be daunting,” Amy says, “but in our second year, the students were excited about starting again and more teachers were on board as well.” The Blue Spruce program has provided many opportunities for rich discussions and insight. In total, the Grades 3-6 students read 918 books this year. One student said, “I actually liked Butt Sandwich and Tree. I don't usually read books like that [novels] but there were funny parts and I could imagine it in my head.” It seems Amy's Forest program is really taking root.



FOR display in Halton Catholic District School Board

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At Dixon Grove Jr. Middle School in Etobicoke, the library had been shuttered for two and a half years when Wendy Burch Jones arrived as the new Teacher-Librarian. “The goal was just to get them back into the library and checking out books,” she said. “And, more importantly, to cultivate a culture of reading within the school community. Emphasizing the importance of student voice and reading for enjoyment.” Replanting the Forest of Reading® as a central focus within the school’s library programming through the winter was key. Using the amazing nominated titles, she highlighted different books each week, getting students excited about the programs and encouraging them to read through the passports. She even got her principal to agree to pay for Forest of Reading Festival tickets to any reader who read through at least one passport (all 10 books for one of the programs). Engagement was low to start, but between January and April, 28% of students checked out books that hadn’t done so in the first four months of the year. That’s pretty impressive growth!



FOR bulletin board at Dixon Grove Junior Middle School

In the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN), board-wide Silver Birch and Red Maple celebrations have been a staple for years. Sidelined by the pandemic, they were back in full force this year, with the Silver Birch Celebration taking a new digital format while keeping the traditional elements of author visits and workshops. This format allowed over 800 Grade 5 and 6 students from schools across the board to participate. One student commented, “This was the best day ever! I forgot I was at school!” The Red Maple celebration was back in-person for over 500 students with a live author panel featuring nominees Paul Coccia, Theresa Toten and Kathy Kacer. The Yellow Cedar program is also a feature at the Niagara event, and this year activities for the Méléze and Tamarac

programs were added to the mix as well. Fan favourite workshops featuring cooking, sports, STEAM activities, and therapy dogs came back, all connected to nominated books. Teachers commented that their “students have made memories that will last a lifetime!” and that it was good to see such a “sense of community surrounding books.”



Pictures of the DSBN Red Maple Celebration

For many years, Grimsby Public Library had a long tradition of running a Battle of the Books event for area schools, but like many other events, library closures due to the pandemic brought that to a halt. This year, Peggy Cline, Acting Children’s Coordinator for the Grimsby Public Library, decided to go all in on the Forest instead. They created an impressive line of GPL branded Forest passports, activities, and bookmarks to promote the books and the Library offerings. Readers were connected to the books through QR codes on the promotional material. “The books really got checked out a lot,” Peggy says, “And we are definitely going to continue to develop our Forest program in the future.” GPL has chosen to use this year’s Silver Birch and Express winners for their summer book clubs. One other area of growth she sees is to resurrect that “Battle” format with the nominated books and local schools, perhaps in a virtual format. It’s great to see public libraries get involved and support the school programs in creative ways.

Photo courtesy of Grimsby Public Library

The Forest of Reading Festival returned to an in-person format for most programs, hosted again at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto

...continued on page 24

...continued from page 23



Photo courtesy of Grimsby Public Library

on the shore of Lake Ontario. For two days, over 4,500 readers came together to celebrate their #booklove, #authoradoration, and #IReadCanadian zest with their favourite Forest of Reading® authors and illustrators, autograph sessions, workshops, and of course, the Award ceremonies.

Those of us attending could almost feel it in the air: an energy that pulsed like a heartbeat, fueled simply by the joy of reading. Students were vibrating with excitement. This year's Silver Birch Award-winning author, Colleen Nelson, posted a five-second video clip of readers cheering to illustrate the moment her book, "The Undercover Book List," was announced as the winner. The noise was deafening. Hundreds of readers jumped up and down, screaming and cheering and hooting and hollering, some with tears in their eyes, clutching the book to their chests – so thrilled were they that **their** book and author had won. In her post, Nelson wrote, "Whenever someone says 'kids aren't reading', I think of moments like this!" It was indeed magical.



Readers celebrate the moment "The Undercover Book List" is named the winner of the 2023 Silver Birch Award.

All day readers walked around enjoying the #booklove vibe, capitalizing on the chance to embrace the #booknerd side of their identities. Surrounded by like-minded peers, they could be themselves in this space. Tweens giggling over the chance to meet their favourite authors, shrieks of glee over book-themed stickers and buttons, readers delighting in the opportunity to receive a free book due to the generosity of Festival sponsors, and, in a tent that exuded the energy of the day, kids writing love letters to authors & illustrators - expressing their appreciation & admiration for the very books & stories that had brought them together.



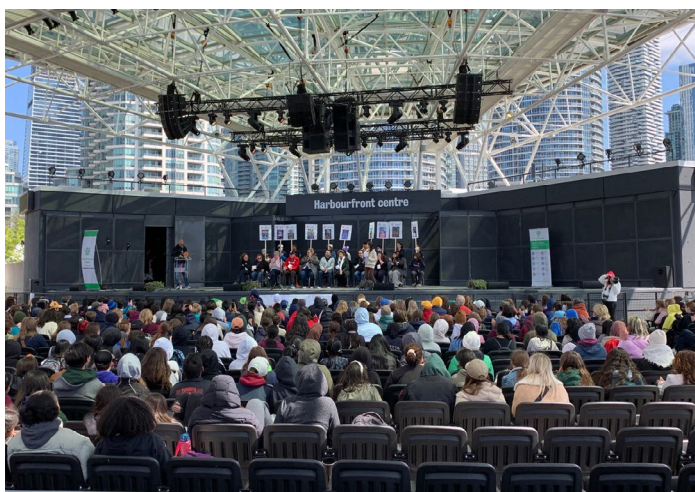
Readers write love letters to their favourite authors and illustrators at the Forest of Reading Festival at Harbourfront Centre, May 16 & 17, 2023.

But the Festival was not quite the same as it has been in previous years. After being virtual for two years during the pandemic; some award ceremonies continued online. A decision was made early by festival organizers to keep the Blue Spruce ceremony in a virtual format. While not universally popular, keeping this ceremony online allowed our youngest readers to continue to have access to these authors and illustrators as they had enjoyed throughout the pandemic years when it all went virtual.

While both the Silver Birch and White Pine ceremonies sold out, the lack of sales for the Yellow Cedar and French language programs resulted in the difficult decision to return those ceremonies to virtual formats for this year. While the virtual format for ceremonies arguably provides access to schools in locations further from Toronto that would otherwise be unable to attend them in person, it is certainly not the same as the energy created when authors, illustrators and readers can connect in person.

...continued on page 25

...continued from page 24



Readers watch while nominees are introduced for the Red Maple Award Ceremony at Harbourfront Centre, May 17, 2023.

Whatever the future holds for the Forest of Reading®, it is clear that this old canopy has lots of room for new growth. In reimagining aspects of both the program and the Festival, organizers can now consider how to capture the magic that readers experience when they are more involved in the program. Readers who get to meet authors with school visits, students who participate on the Kid and Teen Summer Reading Committees, readers who have the honour of introducing authors & illustrators at the award ceremonies, and students who experience the thrill of seeing authors and illustrators in person at autograph sessions at the Festival all understand the excitement hiding among the trees. It is these readers, perhaps, that have experienced the true “love of reading” experiences that may translate into a lifelong love of books or even a future career in librarianship, publishing or writing. It is these key moments that make this program so much more than just about the books.

As teacher-librarians know, the Forest of Reading® was always about more than just books. It's really about engaging readers. One first-time participant from Dixon Grove Jr. Middle School in Etobicoke was jubilant to be at the festival. The Grade 7 student arrived in Canada from Afghanistan in October and, as an English language learner, read through the entire Silver Birch Express passport by the second week in April. Her ability to find her voice in retelling each title, slowly but surely finding the English words to express what she wanted to say, was a testament to the power of these stories. It was also a testament to the wisdom of the Silver Birch Express Selection Committee to choose such engaging titles so that she was able to find ways to connect to each book. Her determination and persistence, and the look of pride on her face when she completed all ten titles, are the reasons we put in the hours of extra work and effort to make the program work in our schools. Her success is our success. This incredible student even stepped up at the last minute and volunteered to introduce one of the Silver Birch Express authors at the Award Ceremony in front of hundreds of her peers. This is the depth of her love for the Forest of Reading® and what it gave to her as a newcomer to Canada. I suspect it is a moment she will not soon forget.



These students applied and were selected to be sign carriers and nominee presenters. They are pictured here corralled ahead of the Silver Birch Award ceremony.

And that is the real magic of the Forest of Reading®: that the feelings of joy and #booklove created seem to be long-lasting. Many authors speak of the one book or author visit that helped them believe they could be a writer. Perhaps then, the power of this program lies in the connections that are made – between students and books, readers and authors, kids and dreams. “Even on their way back to the subway after it was all over, they were still bouncing down the sidewalk,” noted Jen Ferguson, White Pine nominated author, “It was something else!”



Readers are elated to see Ainara Alleyne, the Instagram star of [@ainarasbookshelf](#), hosting the Silver Birch Award Ceremony at the Forest of Reading Festival. ■

Bellmoore's Library

Learning Commons:

A Place for Everybody

Written by Jenn Angle, Teacher-Librarian, in collaboration with Makayla Boaf, Makenna Blakely, Mahveen Raza and Purav Patel (Student Voice and Leadership Team, Grade 7 students)

How is our library learning commons a place for everybody? We think deeply about this question when planning learning opportunities and provocations that engage our students to think critically about equity and inclusivity. In fact, this is the question that drives all that we do. This question is at the heart of our planning and our purpose because our library learning commons belongs to our students – all of them. For this reason, we know the learning that happens in our library learning commons should reflect the diversity of our students, and it does. They feel safe and know how much they matter. They see themselves in this place, and the learning that happens here makes it truly the hub of our school. They understand that they have a voice and feel proud to use it.

Building Community: A Safe, Inclusive Place for Everybody

As the largest elementary school in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board with over 1100 students, our library learning commons has become our school's hub – a place for us to come together to share and learn with and from each other. Because our library learning commons is a shared space accessed by every student, it makes sense that this is the heart of the school, where we truly celebrate our diversity. It is in this shared space that our students feel safe to share their ideas and voices and celebrate who they are. Our students feel safe to really be themselves. Perhaps this is because many of them feel a connection to our library learning commons space from very early on in their school experience – many of them come to our library learning commons in their very first year in Junior Kindergarten and every year after that, so the space itself is familiar and we have established a relationship built on connection and trust.

Our library learning commons is also a place where we talk about inclusion almost every day – we speak about what inclusion means and why everybody must feel important and included. We look around the space, and we see it everywhere – recent purchases to add to our dual language collection, Braille added to our OSMO kits, a display featuring Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ stories, a button-making provocation with encouraging equity-inspired messages led by our Student Voice and Leadership Team, a robotics field for students who benefit from hands-on learning opportunities

and student created QR codes with stories supporting Indigenous Heritage Month, to name a few.

These displays, provocations and learning opportunities are always changing, week to week, as we learn with and from our students. Some of these ideas come from quiet conversations with our students: “Why don’t we have more books in Urdu? I’d really like to read with my mom at night?” “Why don’t we have more books with Syrian characters that look like me?” Other provocations are inspired by students who see a need in our school like a student who suggested: “We should all learn how to use our Perkins Braille to show our friend in grade 1 that he matters.” We added new titles to our collection and added a learning opportunity with a Perkins Braille so every student could learn how to read and write in Braille because of these student requests. Our library learning commons is truly a reflection of our students – they inspire everything we do!

Mirrors and Windows: A Diverse Place for Everybody

As educators, we know our students must see themselves in stories that reflect their perspectives and experiences. The mirrors and sliding glass windows analogy inspires how we curate our school library collection – we do so with intention so that our students see themselves in the stories they read and have access to stories with new perspectives and experiences different from their own. But more than our collection, we hope that our library learning commons, the actual space itself, is a place where our students see themselves – their unique backgrounds, cultures and identities. We do this in our displays, provocations and learning opportunities.

We saw the impact a simple learning opportunity could have when one student very recently offered to help us with a display for Sikh Heritage Month. When we started to gather resources for our display, this student could not stop smiling. He felt so proud to contribute to our library learning commons in a way that mattered so deeply to him and his family. He went home that night and spoke with his family about it. The very next day, before the bell even rang, I found this student waiting at our school library doors. He asked if he could help by creating a display for our front foyer that celebrates Sikh Heritage. Of course, we welcomed this idea and offered to support him in any way we could. With the help of his family, this student spent every night that week on his presentation – they did this outside of school hours as a family project because they were just so excited to share more about their identity. We displayed Gurkirat's work in our front display, and he beamed with pride, knowing that other students would understand more about his

...continued on page 27

...continued from page 26

values. We didn't fully realize the impact of Gurkirat's front display until other students came to us with the similar requests.

"May I share more about my home language, Korean?"

"Can I help work on a display about Ramadan?"

"What about a display all about Braille?"

The student requests came in, one after another, and before we knew it, we realized the magic that happens when students can celebrate who they are. The impact of Gurkirat's front display was more fully realized a few days later when a Grade 3 student asked to share a thank you card she made for Gurkirat. She did not know him, but she wanted to share her appreciation for his work on the front display. Her smile beamed brightly, knowing that her heritage matters and other students, her peers, would learn more about her Sikh Heritage.

Their Voices Matter: A Place for Choice and Voice for Everybody

When we consider a new display, provocation or new learning opportunity, we always ask our students, all of them, what they need to feel seen and celebrated – what they consider important to learn joyfully, to feel safe and included. Their voices matter, and they know this when they come to our LLC. Their voices drive the learning that happens in our LLC and must also drive the learning we do as a school community.

This year, we invited a group of incredible Intermediate students to join our Student Voice and Leadership team. As we move forward, their focus is to consider ways we can create an inclusive, positive school culture that celebrates everybody – to do this beyond our LLC.

When considering how they might do this, our Student Voice and Leadership Team invited our students to share their voices. Our team made a plan to ask six student-created questions. Because our LLC is the place that brings us together as a school – all of us – our Student Voice and Leadership Team decided that our LLC would be the best place to do this important work. Our LLC is also the place where our students feel safe to share their ideas and advocate. Our team hoped to gather the most authentic, honest data from our students. They set out butcher paper with their questions displayed throughout our LLC. We spent one week collecting 1100+ student voices and answers to these questions.

- How can we make Bellmoore an even better place to learn?
- What makes you feel safe in your classroom?
- What makes you feel safe at school?
- What excites you about school? What worries you about school?
- What do we need to know about being a student at Bellmoore that we don't already know? What do you want your teachers to know?
- What do you love most about being a Bellmoore student?
- Do you see your identity reflected in your classroom? Do you see your identity reflected in your school?

Our students felt safe to answer these questions. Their answers to these questions were honest and raw. Some of their answers

reassured us that we are on the right track - answers like:

"I love coming to school because my teacher always greets me at the door."

"I love being a student at Bellmoore because I feel safe."

"I like Bellmoore because I know that I matter here."

Other answers, though, reminded us to be reflective about our practice and pedagogy as a staff. Some students responded that they need more DPA and learn best with hands-on learning opportunities. We had students share that they'd like a prayer room during Ramadan and opportunities to share more about their family traditions, as well as to learn more about other cultures. This student voice data, collected in our LLC, reminded us that our students need a safe space to share their ideas and their voices.

Once we collected this valuable student data, our Student Voice and Leadership Team invited our families to also answer questions to support our plan. Our team set up in the Learning Commons during Open House with a student-created QR code to gather this data. We asked families questions about our how we are doing to promote a positive school culture focused on equity and inclusion and invited them to share ideas about how we could do more. Gathering this information from our families is an important piece of the work our Student Voice and Leadership is doing. Every family that answered received a student-created, equity-inspired button which reflected the work we are doing as a school.

Our Student Voice and Leadership Team will use this data to continue moving forward with our equity work. This information will guide us next year as we plan whole-school learning opportunities that reflect the voices of our students and families. We will continue to offer opportunities that amplify our students' voices because we know what is possible when our students feel empowered. Our next initiative, a school-wide podcast called Podmoore: Voices at Bellmoore, will be produced in our library learning commons and will offer students an opportunity to promote equity, come together and share their voices. We have already started brainstorming possible topics and themes. One student asked if they could interview our principal so she could share her ideas about how we will create a positive school culture at our school. Another student would like to record a podcast highlighting Indian recipes and traditional Indian clothing. What better way to build equity in our school than by providing opportunities for our students and staff to share their voices? Our students will decide which topics to explore, share their perspectives and ensure every student has a voice. We will be ready to share our podcast with our school community in September 2023.

As we move forward, we know we must continue this important work – ensuring that our students feel safe, see themselves in the learning opportunities we offer and amplify their voices. This is our focus as a school, but it all started in our library learning commons – this is the space they feel safe, find joy and know they matter. ■

Lisa Lewis

The Importance of School Libraries

The well-being of students has to be the primary objective of every school. When kids read books, they want (and need) to see themselves. And their friends. And their siblings.

And their parents. Teacher-Librarians (TLs) ensure that the school library collection reflects the lived experiences of the children in their communities so that students are protected, nourished and comforted.

“Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors and readers have only to walk through imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror.”¹

The school environment must be an inclusive, empathetic and safe place for children’s voices to be heard. A school library collection must provide access to resources that reflect those who might be marginalized, must have materials that support students’ emotional, social and academic growth, and must have a collection that encourages and cultivates the joy of reading. Never before has the role of the TL been more critical.

In schools, the library environment teaches so much. Children flourish in the library because its collection inspires exploration, independence and shared discovery. The library needs to have a diverse and culturally inclusive collection that recognizes and respects the experiences of its students and their families. Inclusive collections enable educators to have conversations about challenging subjects, allow children to discover what has happened in the past and have discussions about hope and advocacy. TLs take great joy in helping children find books that spark their passion for reading.

TLs wear many hats. They are in charge of developing and curating a collection, teaching children how to find material and helping students to use digital tools. They support staff to source culturally responsive and diverse resources such as books and digital tools. In essence, it is the TL who builds a relevant, authentic and engaging collection. It is this collection that will establish a lifelong zest for reading and thirst for knowledge.

In the last few years, I helped my school library build a collection of novels with neurodivergent characters and themes. These books are of immense value because they allow children to understand what their friends experience and feel. Educators value these books because it lets them support students. The visible and invisible challenges students with learning differences deal with are huge, and when these students were stuck at home during the pandemic,

they did not have access to books that made them feel included and happy. Closing libraries for a year meant that these children were cut off from the resources (non-fiction and fiction) they adore. This loss heightened the children’s feelings of loneliness and separation. “On average 13% of students will have some form of disability that impacts their ability to access their education. Of these, 35% are thought to have a specific learning disability, which means they have a specific deficit that impacts how they take in, process and retain information.”²

TLs are essential in schools, and any reduction in the school library program stunts learning and causes students to feel marginalized and excluded. A forward-thinking society should be finding ways to expand school libraries. But sadly, the opposite is the case.

The TL Job is on the Cutting Block

In 2011, I was a full-time librarian. But for the last nine years, I have been a half-time librarian and have been required to split my time between being a TL (half of the time) and teaching a variety of subjects (the other half of the time). In fact, I’m even less than a half-time librarian. Whenever a teacher is absent and no substitute teacher is available, I am pulled from my TL role for that day (or several days) and forced to fill in, in the classroom. So, I spend less than half my time as a TL.

And it’s the kids who pay the price. I’m not able to spend the time that is necessary to make my school library thrive. The library collection suffers and the students who need a properly stocked library suffer. Another consequence is that when I am pulled from the library, I am not able to locate materials for teachers in a timely manner.

During the pandemic, the situation was even worse. My school board closed all of its libraries and redeployed its TLs full-time into the classroom. There was no access to the library in the school and no one was responsible for finding the resources that would resonate with students and help them grow into responsible adults. It was truly a disaster.

What about next year? The TL role in my school has now been officially reduced from 50% to 39.1% of a full-time role. The TL role has also been reduced in other schools.

Libraries are not the priority they need to be. We are going in the wrong direction. Our priorities are backward, and students are the ones who will suffer. We have to change the way we think about the importance of school libraries.

1 Rudine Sims Bishop *National Council of Teachers of English*. NCTE. (n.d.). Retrieved September 25, 2022, from <https://library.ncte.org/journals/LA/issues/v85-2/6175>

2 [Raising World Children https://raisingworldchildren.com/2018/04/13/like-learning-disability/](https://raisingworldchildren.com/2018/04/13/like-learning-disability/)

The Consequence of Failing to Prioritize School Libraries

For many years, school libraries have been the centre of an effective primary school. The library is a hub of information and social gathering. A properly supervised and well-stocked library is essential for student growth and learning. Teachers go to libraries to get the resources to teach important concepts to their students; students look for books to inspire them to be their best selves; shy children find comfort from a caring librarian who helps them come out of their shells and find their passion; students learn to collaborate and learn from each other; students learn how to source authentic and relevant information, and they learn how to question and analyze information. In essence, the library is the place for participatory learning where the school community congregates to discuss, wonder, research, create and innovate.

A TL can ensure that books get into the classroom for small reading groups. When classroom teachers have these books, they are able to take their students on journeys that connect their class to communities, local and global, where stories have the capability to captivate us in a myriad of ways. The power of reading together is immense and intimate.

Libraries also create opportunities for kids to feel like they are doing a service for their school. I have students who help me shelve books, create displays and act as assistants for their peers when they search for information. These students have immense pride in making their school library an exciting and welcoming place and making their school better.

And school libraries are not only for the children. A thriving library means a thriving community. For example, in my school, we have an Adult/Child Book Club. Students, parents, and other members of the community come together once a month or so, all having read the same book, to discuss and learn from each other. They leave the session invigorated and proud. Children learn from adults, and, most importantly, adults learn from children. The adults have the opportunity to see that the library they remember from childhood has morphed into a hub to support 21st century learning.

And yet, libraries are not a priority, to our detriment and to the detriment of future generations.

What Can We Do About It?

We need to change the way we think about school libraries. They are not an afterthought. They are essential. They bring kids out of their shells; they help kids see themselves in books and feel seen, heard, loved and included; they help adults and children bond over stories and big ideas; they help children become critical thinkers, and they help children become better adults.

We need to involve our parent community in the fight to keep libraries dynamic. We need parents to understand what the TL does and how the library is essential for the mental health and growth of students.

We can't be embarrassed to advocate for more funding for libraries and more time for TLs. Our students' futures depend on it. ■

Libraries and Literacy

Brian J. D'Souza

Whether looking at statistical or anecdotal information, it's easy to see that low literacy is an issue that plagues Ontario. The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC) compiled data that suggests about half of Canada's adult population could not pass a high school level of assessment. Consider this when examining the rapid rise in disinformation, misinformation and outright conspiracy theories: PIACC tested people's ability to read and digest lengthy and complex texts to accurately process that information.

About a year ago, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released "Right to Read," a public inquiry into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities. According to the report, "The inquiry focused on word-level reading and the associated early reading skills that are a foundation for good reading comprehension." This means that the OHRC looked at selected school boards and focused on classroom learning.

There were 157 recommendations, yet not once does the word *library* appear. The inquiry didn't touch on the essential role of fully staffed school libraries in encouraging early literacy. There was a very tight thesis used to understand the problem of low literacy rates in Ontario that side-stepped many actionable steps.

The reality of classroom instruction is that it hinges on overworked and overburdened teachers. They have an average of 29 students, with some classrooms having 33. High ratios combined with the need to push through a mandated curriculum and a variety of subjects, we can start to understand why many students fall through the cracks.

When fully staffed, school libraries are places where students can get exposure to literacy in a variety of fun ways: storytime programming; new books; instruction in online searching and much more.

The intangibles of a school library weave a magic that engages and stimulates young minds. Library staff promote books related to current events, like the war in Ukraine, popular music, or holidays. School library staff deliver programs like story time with passion and enthusiasm and have the ability to acquire new and relevant titles for the collection.

The reality of schools is that there are multiple stakeholders: teachers, support staff, administration, parents and children. Each group tends to pull in their own direction. Sadly, teachers have become objects of derision through media gas-lighting, and support staff, like library technicians are almost invisible in the public eye.

While there is portion of the school's budget and staffing meant to go to school libraries, administrators and other stakeholders have the discretion to divert both funds and staff from school libraries. The diminished stature of school libraries could be correlated to declining literacy.

When I was a library technician in an elementary school, I once got a handwritten note from a child that said, "You make reading fun, Mr. D'Souza!". It made me feel good to know that my work had an impact.

As much as classroom instruction contributes towards literacy, investing in school libraries, as well as full-time staff to run them, would provide incredible tools for our children's futures. ■

By Jonelle St. Aubyn

How I Use Everything I Learned in Retail to Help Me as a Teacher-Librarian

The start of the school year can be a hectic and incredibly busy time. But it's also a time when it is important to set the tone for the school year and get everyone, staff and students, in the right frame of mind. Though it might sound strange, I reach back to my days as a retail store worker when I am getting ready to start the school year in the library learning commons. These little tips really work to get the year started positively for me. Read on to learn more...

In this role, I never thought I would use the skills that I learned when I worked in retail as a teenager. I'll just put it out there right now. I worked in the shoe department at the Bay. Probably not the best idea as a self-proclaimed shoe addict, but I digress. However, when I stop to think about it, there are so many parallels between what I did as a retail store employee, how I treated my customers and how I treated my students when they came into the library learning commons. It's kind of scary and a bit hilarious too. As a teacher-librarian, whether we think so or not, we are definitely in the business of customer service and sales. What are we selling when everything in the library is free? We are selling the love of reading (as just one of the 6 million things we do)! And just like any store, there are a lot of things that we have to do to seal the deal and keep our customers coming back!

Step 1 - The Welcome

Just like when you enter most stores, the employees there are supposed to greet you with a smile and a wave. This is designed to make you feel comfortable and welcome in the store environment. My desk is right where the students walk in, and I give that smile and/or wave as they walk in the door. I want them to feel welcome. I want them to be here. And showing that starts with my team and I welcoming them into the space. It's effective in stores, and it's effective in libraries.

Step 2 - How Can I Help You?

I know, I know ... I said that everything in the library is free. And it is. But we want our customers to leave our spaces with something to read. So how does this relate to retail? When you go into a store and you start looking around, the salesperson normally asks, how can I help you? You might not need any help because you know exactly what you came to get and want to get it and leave. You might decide to browse the aisles, not knowing exactly what you are looking for, but you know you want to find something. Or you have no clue what you came for or even what you are doing in the store, so you might as well look around. Our students are the same way. You are going to have the students who know exactly what they are looking for and will run right to the shelf to get it. You will have those who are frequent visitors who are looking for something, but they are not sure exactly what they want that day. And then you will have those who might just be visiting with friends or wandering in for a place to go, been brought down by their teacher, and they may or may not love reading but need or want to pick something up. Remember that store employee who kind of lurks around and watches you (I'm sure I'm making this sound creepier than it really is), but they give you some time to look around and then ask if you want some help. This is what I do too! Whether from the floor or my desk, I can usually spot the students who look like they can use some assistance, and I offer my expertise to help them find a book they will be happy with.

Step 3 - Assistance With the Purchase

Ok ... now, just like when you are in the store and have totally given up on trying to find what you are looking for, you are willing to accept some help. A great salesperson will ask you some questions to find out your personal style, favourite brands, and the purpose of what you are buying. It works the same in the library! I'm asking students what kind of books they like, who are their favourite authors or if this book is for pleasure reading or for an assignment. When someone finds



the right shoe, it's magical. It looks great, it's comfortable and the fit is perfect! This is what I attempt to do as the teacher-librarian ... find the book that is a perfect fit for that student!

Step 4 - Celebrate the Purchase

In retail, we were always taught to celebrate the purchase with the shopper. That meant hyping up whatever item they were buying so that they would feel good about buying it. But that didn't mean lying. And I always told customers that if they got home and they didn't like it, to come back, and I would help them find something that works better for them. I do the same thing when students get to the desk to check out. Whether I helped them find the book or not, I'm always hyping up the purchase. So, what did you take out? I ask them to show me at this point, which always seems to elicit a smile. Then I'm going in for the close ... I'm talking about how great the book is, how much they are going to love it and how many other kids have loved it. My favourite is when a book is going out for the first time. We have a bell we ring to celebrate the fact that it has finally been picked up and taken out by someone. It makes them feel good, and I feel good too. We also offer a free gift with purchase, whether it be a bookmark or pencils; we want them to have something a little extra and a little special with that checkout.

Step 5 - The Goodbye

Once we have sealed the deal and the purchase has been made in retail, we make sure to thank the patron for coming by and invite them to come again. Even if nothing has been purchased at that time, we still do it because there is always the hope that they will come back and buy something the next time they shop with us; it's the same deal in the library. I like to thank the students for coming in and let them know we look forward to having them back again. Again, it's the small things that are actually the big things in the long run.

So, is that it? Nope! There are so many things aside from getting the right books in students' hands that I use from my retail days. Let me explain.

The Displays

I like to shop where the displays look amazing, and I don't have to work too hard to find the latest and greatest in fashion. I like the displays to be new and fresh, and fun. It's what is going to draw me to shop there in the first place. Same with the library! We have very attractive book trees that allow us to easily display books by theme and to display our latest and greatest finds. I have fancy decor for varying themes throughout the month—tablecloths on the welcome sign table with cute decorations like teddy bears on top. Our bulletin boards get changed every month with new pictures and themes, and celebrations. We want our patrons to know that we care enough about them to dress up the place. We also provide comfortable seating to keep them wanting to come back and spend some time with us.



Marketing and Advertising

Any successful retail store has great marketing and advertising. Whether leveraging social media, using flyers and posters or making catchy commercials, they have to find the best tools to market their products to their target audience. As we all know, teenagers can be a tough crowd. It takes a lot to impress them. We try to make it fun by offering giveaways and contests to keep

...continued on page 31

them returning. I also do the announcements at my school, so it's the perfect opportunity to tell students about guest speakers, new books or games that we have added to the LLC. Our administration also helps us post things to the school's Instagram and Twitter accounts, as they have a lot of followers. We have to get them in the space before they can choose books. We offer longer hours, comfortable seating, board games and video games, a self-serve makerspace area and bean bag chairs. Promoting all we have to offer helps us make that first step of getting the customer in the door.

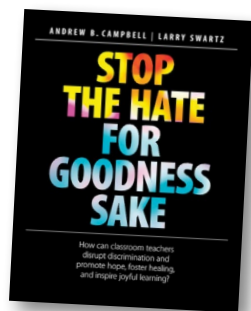
Customer/Client Relationships

Sometimes in my past life working in retail, I would have the really frequent customers. You know, the people who wanted to know before anyone else when a sale was coming or when their favourite items were about to hit the store shelves. They would even leave me their phone numbers for a heads-up phone call so they could be the first when something they loved arrived. We have done something similar in our LLC. When a student requests a book, we call them in their classrooms when the book comes in to ensure that they will be the first person to have that hot ticket item. They feel comfortable enough to make the requests, and we do our best to honour every student request that comes in.

These little retail tips have definitely helped to make the library learning commons a warm and welcoming place that students want to be in, and it sets the right kind of tone for the year. It's always the little things that make a big difference. ■

Professional Resources

Kasey Whalley



Stop the Hate for Goodness Sake: How Can Classroom Teachers Disrupt Discrimination and Promote Hope, Foster Healing, and Inspire Joyful Learning?

By Andrew B. Campbell and Larry Swartz
Pembroke Publishers, 2023

This is a small (160 pages) but mighty book that gives practical and necessary guidance on dismantling hate in the classroom. Co-authors Andrew B. Campbell (Dr. ABC) and Larry Swartz have over 65 years of combined experience teaching, mentoring and leading

educators in the classroom. They have put together a book that provides contextual information, practical lessons, and insightful stories that will spark creative and meaningful ways to eliminate hate in the classroom.

The book is divided into seven chapters that begin with definitions of hate and move through confronting hate and ultimately erasing it from the classroom. Each chapter has relevant and varied lessons that can be applied as-is or adapted for specific classrooms. The lessons are straightforward and clearly planned; many offer guiding questions that prepare the students beforehand. The lessons are interspersed with self-reflection questions for the educator so that everyone shares the responsibility of dismantling hate.

The exploration of what hate looks like and how to combat it is nuanced in this book. The authors encourage the reader to examine hate both inside and outside of the classroom. They talk specifically about how hate may look in a classroom or school environment but remind us that hate is often perpetuated and taught in other environments. They have created lessons and guiding questions that encourage students to think about where hate is and where they are, both inside and outside the school.

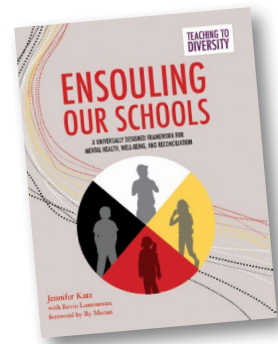
One of the most refreshing things about this book is that its focus is nearly

entirely Canadian, and when evidence is available from a Canadian source, it is used. Campbell and Swartz engage with the audience by including first-person accounts of hate inserted throughout the book. These stories, along with statistics that are available, show the depths and permeations of hate in Canada. The co-authors do a remarkable job of making hate real for everyone, not just those disproportionately affected by it.

This book is very practical in nature and would benefit educators who aren't sure where to begin on their journey of creating an inclusive hate-free classroom. It is also a great resource for educators looking for more lessons that integrate anti-hate messaging into the curriculum. The straightforward, concise and practical knowledge in this book makes *Stop the Hate for Goodness Sake* a great reference tool for educators.

Ensouling Our Schools: A Universally Designed Framework for Mental Health, Well-Being, and Reconciliation

By Jennifer Katz, contributions by Kevin Lamoureux
Portage & Main, 2018



Ensouling Our Schools examines how educators can embrace a holistic view of well-being and mental health in the classroom. Its focus is on creating classrooms where students' mental health and well-being are prioritized as a method of increasing success, decreasing burnout, and sharing joy. The book uses a universal design framework and Indigenous teachings to build actionable lessons that intend to move schools toward places of healing and reconciliation.

The book begins by examining what spiritual education is and why it is necessary for the health of ourselves and our students to heal our souls/spirits in schools. They use this definition as a springboard for why healthy students and educators result in better learning and teaching and how mental health is a necessary focus for the well-being of this generation. The work presented is rooted in pedagogical and neurological science and Indigenous practices and reconciliation; it encourages educators to understand and engage with both.

This book asks educators to examine their own mental health and their position in the world and school. The graphics and questions throughout the book encourage thoughtful reflection, purposeful redesign, and actionable ideas that allow the reader to examine the environment in which they find themselves. It takes a nuanced examination of trauma, learning, and neurology; the lessons are adaptable for students of different emotional readiness, and guidance is given on broaching difficult topics.

Katz and Lamoureux take a strong stance that this method is applicable to all students, and the methodology is rooted in relationships and science – who we are and how our brains work. They also recognize that the information they provide is a starting point and highly adaptable to you (the teacher) and your students. One of the more poignant points in this book is the authors stressing that the well-being of students is a collective endeavour and that reconciliation, acceptance and inclusion need to involve everyone working to change the system, not just minority or marginalized groups.

This book is a very good reference for understanding how a focus on mental health and Indigenous teachings can intersect and disrupt the current school system, which ignores, undermines, or misunderstands the current mental health crisis in schools. It is recommended to teaching and non-teaching staff as a touchstone for developing and encouraging universal and inclusive mental health programming in your classrooms and schools. ■

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