Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

Volume 15 Number 2 Summer 2017 ISSN 1542-9806

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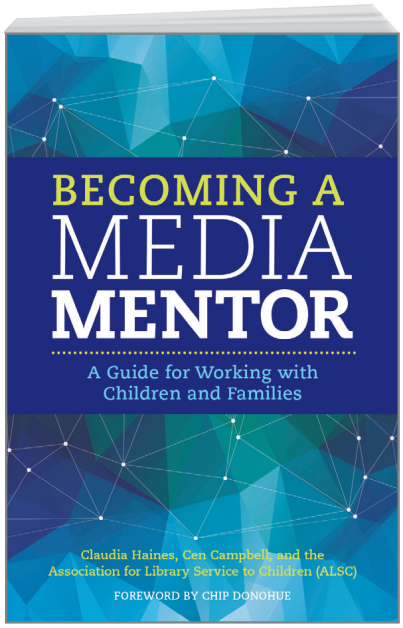
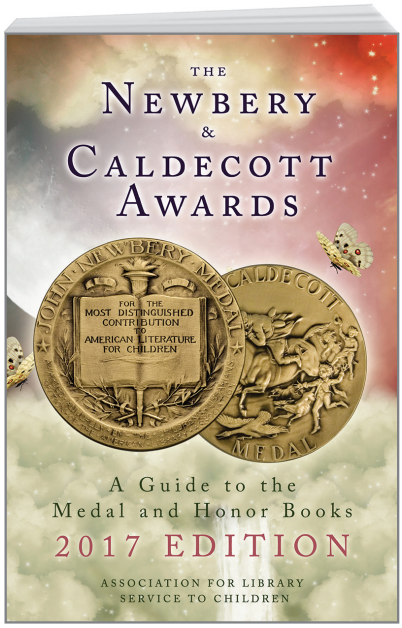


Becoming a Media Mentor: A Guide for Working with Children and Families

Claudia Haines, Cen Campbell, and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)

ISBN: 978-0-8389-1463-2

Drawing on detailed case studies from a wide variety of libraries and community partnerships to showcase inspiring media mentorship in action with ages 0-14, this book empowers youth services staff to confidently assist families and caregivers as they navigate the digital world.

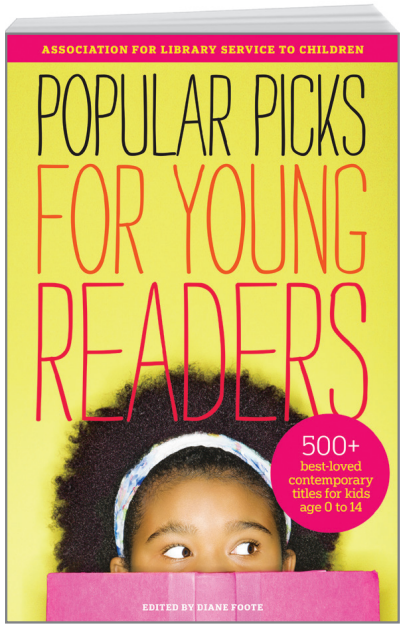


The Newbery and Caldecott Awards: A Guide to the Medal and Honor Books, 2017 Edition

Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)

ISBN: 978-0-8389-1567-7

Librarians and teachers everywhere rely on this guidebook for quick reference and collection development and also as a resource for curriculum links and readers' advisory. Updated with the 2017 award and honor books!



Popular Picks for Young Readers

Edited by Diane Foote for ALSC

ISBN: 978-0-8389-3605-4

Spotlighting more than 500 recent titles, and with selections geared towards every child's interest and reading level, this guide will help librarians, teachers, caregivers and others connect young readers to books they're sure to love.

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2016 APEX® AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE

Editor's Note
CAL: The Perfect Marriage

By Sharon Verbeten

Fifteen years ago, when I was working full-time as an editor in a small town in Wisconsin, a library friend of mine passed along a job opening to me. Seems ALSC was looking for an editor for its division magazine to be called *Children and Libraries*. The friend, aware that I had a library degree, thought the job seemed right up my alley.

While I was confident in my journalistic skills, it had been a few years since I dusted off my library chops. Sure, I visited my local library weekly and offered to help in any way possible, but the last time I had worked professionally, we had card catalogs and there was no such thing as Wi-Fi.

I figured I didn't have much of a chance, but even though I was happy as a writer and editor, I was looking to use my library skills again. So I sent in my resume . . . and got an interview!

Fast forward to today. I know, time flies, but it really is true. It was always my goal to make *Children and Libraries* more than just a trade publication and journal of record for ALSC. I wanted it to be filled with more than just board actions, department news, and refereed articles—not that those aren't important, but I wanted *CAL* to be engaging as a good read as well. And I hope we've accomplished that.

We've had outstanding theme issues relating to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Caldecott Medal, services to special needs populations, the makerspace movement, and more. We've featured articles by and about some literary greats, including my personal favorite, David Wiesner.

I remember my first year, attending my first ALA conference, worried about filling the magazine and nervous about making contacts. But somehow, it all worked out, and attending these conferences twice a year has been a highlight of my fifteen years. One highlight was traveling to New Orleans in 2006, which was memorable not only because it was our first conference post-Hurricane Katrina, but because I was pregnant with my daughter, Holland (in the scorching summer Gulf Coast heat!).

A second highlight was getting stranded a few years ago in Chicago—just five hours from my home in Green Bay, but unable to get back in a timely fashion due to the blizzard of the decade!

I'm so proud to have made so many contacts and still enjoy working with such a fine group of librarians. And, no, this isn't my swan-song editorial, although it may read that way!

I hope to continue to represent ALSC and produce *CAL* for as many years as they'll have me. Thanks for all your continued support . . . and for indulging me my memories! &

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Children and Libraries is the official journal of ALSC, a division of the American Library Association. The journal primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, which showcases current scholarly research and practice in library service to children. It also serves as a vehicle for communication to the ALSC membership, spotlighting significant activities and initiatives of the Association. (From the journal's "Policies and Procedures" document adopted by the ALSC board, April 2004, revised, 2014.)

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PEER-REVIEWED

Motivating Boys to Read

Guys Read, a Summer Library Reading Program for Boys

DEBORAH R. DILLON, DAVID G. O'BRIEN, CASSANDRA SCHARBER, AND KRISTEN NICHOLS-BESEL

A 2013 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) report, *How a Nation Engages with Art*, illustrates that voluntary "literary" reading rates of adults have fallen[1] compared to an applauded rise in 2008.[2]

Prior to these two reports, other NEA research showed a serious decline in both literary and book reading by adults of all ages, races, incomes, and education levels.[3] Other survey data measuring what youth do in their leisure time indicated that young men and women read fewer than twelve minutes per day.[4] These reports show that boys' frequency of reading lags behind that of girls and that boys are reading neither the number of books nor the range of genres they should read as they progress through the elementary grades.

Public libraries, armed with data on declining reading rates and continued academic achievement gaps between boys and girls, have tried to encourage programs that support young people in reading. This article illustrates Guys Read, one library system's program geared toward preteen and adolescent boys.

Created by children's author and former National Ambassador for Children's Literature Jon Scieszka, Guys Read is a web-based literacy program that strives to motivate boys to read by connecting them with materials they want to read, in ways they like to read (see www.guysread.com). Scieszka has these goals for Guys Read:

- Call attention to boys' literacy.
- Expand our definition of reading.
- Give boys choice.
- Encourage male role models.
- Be realistic. Start small.
- Spread the Guys Read word.[5]

Working in tandem with Scieszka, a Guys Read Summer Book Club program was designed by Hennepin County (MN) Library (HCL) in 2005. The goals of the initiative included encouraging boys to read more over the summer months and beyond, developing positive relationships between boys and male book club




Deborah R. Dillon *is Associate Dean for Graduate and Professional Programs, Professor of Literacy Education, and the Guy Bond Chair in Reading;* ***David G. O'Brien*** *is Professor of Literacy Education; and* ***Cassandra Scharber*** *is Associate Professor of Learning Technologies; all at the University of Minnesota.* ***Kristen Nichols-Besel*** *is Adjunct Professor of English Education, College Writing, and Multilingual Writing Support at Bethel University and Adjunct Professor in the Graduate Teaching Licensure Program at The College of St. Scholastica, Minnesota.*

facilitators, and fostering boys' positive attitudes and associations toward reading.[6]

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this evaluation study was to document for HCL what clientele the program attracted; what the book clubs looked like in action; when and how the book clubs operated in particular settings; and the impact of the program on boys' attitudes, perspectives about themselves as readers, and reading practices. University researchers were asked to collaborate with the library staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the Guys Read Summer Book Club program. We hope the results of this evaluation study will help bring attention to the important work libraries do in fostering reading with young people, including boys; inform other libraries in their development of children's book clubs; and encourage rigorous evaluations of library programs. The following research questions guided the evaluation study:

1. What did the boys think about reading prior to and after participating in the Guys Read book clubs?

2. What are boys' perceptions about themselves as readers prior to and after participating in the book clubs?

3. What books/materials do boys read and what impact on reading habits and choices do the Guys Read clubs have?

4. What perceptions did the boys have of other males as readers prior to and after participating in the Guys Read book clubs and interacting with male book club leaders/mentors?

5. What activities and structures associated with the Guys Read book clubs helped the boys find reading meaningful and worthwhile?

6. What engaged boys and supported their reading and completion of books over the course of the book clubs?

Perspectives and Theoretical Framework

Work highlighting boys' and young men's reading often sets up dichotomies in which boys are compared to girls by overgeneralizing gendered identity and privileging certain forms and genres of reading in highlighting girls' advantages over boys.[7] Rowan et al. argue that researchers should focus on characteristics other than gender, such as socioeconomic status and class, that impact achievement.[8] They call for an examination of diverse individuals and perspectives, including multiple subjectivities—acknowledging the many ways of being a boy, a girl, or, as Blackburn noted, "any other particular identity."[9]

Rowan et al. also argue for broader conceptions of literacy, taking up the perspective of the New Literacy Studies (NLS), in which literacies are not singular but "embedded and situated within diverse institutional and cultural practices."[10]

Smith and Wilhelm focus on understanding the perspectives and experiences of boys as individuals because of the diversity of boys' perspectives on reading and on themselves as readers. These researchers found that boys see reading as a "schoolish activity." They advocate disassociating the experience of reading from its articulation in schools, including the genres read in school; and moving boys to spaces (such as libraries) in which they can take up reading, have choice in what they read, and form positive perceptions of themselves as readers.[11]

These theoretical perspectives that avoid essentializing gender and complicate literate practices as multiple, situated, and constitutive of and constituted by multiple identities were used to guide our research and interpretation of findings.

Participants, Methods, Data Sources, and Analysis Tools

Designed for boys to join together with other boys in small groups (ten to twenty boys per group) to read books and discuss them, sixteen Guys Read summer book clubs were studied between June and August 2006. The boys who participated in these clubs were primarily readers. Individual clubs met between three and six times over the course of the summer. Data were collected as a naturally occurring part of the program in three stages that moved from macro- to micro-levels of investigation, which are described next.

Stage One

We gathered data from 76 of the 194 participants (39 percent) across the sixteen clubs using an online pre- and post-survey. Survey respondents from the study were predominantly white males (84 percent) with some males of color (4 percent Native American, 3 percent Asian, 3 percent African American) from fourth to ninth grade. The survey included thirty-two items, some choice and some open-ended. It assessed boys' reading attitudes and habits, perspectives and roles of gender and reading, perceptions about ability and self-efficacy as readers, and perceptions about the Guys Read program. These data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis.

The research team also gathered pre- and post-program focus group data at the initial and final meetings of the discussion groups. A focus group interview guide with structured questions prompted fifteen- to twenty-minute discussions among the group members from twelve of the sixteen clubs. The purpose of the focus group sessions was to enable boys to elaborate on their survey responses. These sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed; the transcripts were analyzed using a question-by-question analysis to generate patterns of responses.[12] Twelve book clubs completed both pre- and post-program

focus group interviews. Fifteen total pre-program focus group interviews and thirteen total post-program focus group interviews were conducted.

Stage Two

Across the sixteen library sites that held Guys Read clubs, we selected seven to observe across the summer of 2006. We observed each of the selected clubs two or more times across the program (beginning, middle, and end) for a total of twenty-two meeting observations. The clubs were observed as follows: Club A: 5 times; Club B: 4 times; Club C: 3 times; Club D: 3 times; Club E: 3 times; Club F: 2 times; Club G: 2 times. To ensure that field notes were complete and focused, a structured observation guide was used by evaluators to record data. Data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis.[13]

Stage Three

The research team interviewed eleven boys individually and seven in small groups from across the sixteen clubs. We used purposive sampling to select the boys according to these criteria: one or two boys from each of the seven clubs observed; boys who represented a range of perspectives about reading and participating in the program; and boys who seemed open and interested in articulating their ideas.[14]

Our goal was to glean additional data about the boys' individual perceptions about reading and their experiences in the clubs. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed using a within- and cross-case analysis of responses to questions; case study write-ups were constructed for each interviewee.[15]

Overall Results

Pre-survey data indicated that the boys who participated in the Guys Read program initially chose to do so because their parents wanted them to (46 percent); they wanted to be with friends (39 percent); they wanted to participate in an organized activity over the summer (39 percent); they wanted to read some books *they wanted to read* (32 percent); and they wanted to discuss books so they could understand them better (32 percent).

Before the program, the participants viewed girls as more frequent readers than boys because of a perception that girls have more time to read; participants noted specifically that girls are less involved in sports or in playing video games. However, the post-surveys showed that the boys tended to believe that the two genders read about the same amount. The post-survey asked the boys if the Guys Read program helped them become better readers; 67 percent selected "yes" and explained that they were reading more books and discussing them. The boys also indicated that they believe they will read more in the future because of the Guys Read program (69 percent) because they learned about and read good books, the reading and discussion "inspired them," and they believed the more you read the better you become at reading.

Finally, the boys noted in the post-survey that the benefits of participating in the Guys Read program included the opportunity to read more books, to "get better at reading," and to have fun.

Observations of book club sessions elucidated a juxtaposition of academic (school-like) space and social/club space (eating, joking, and jostling). The actions observed within the forty-five-minute book club sessions confirmed the boys' perceptions that the program was fun. Most boys came to the session prepared and willing to participate in the discussion. Focus group and individual interview comments provided more specific responses or elaborated on the constructs assessed in the survey.

Results Organized by Research Questions

Research Question #1

What do boys think about reading prior to, and after participating in the Guys Read book clubs? In response to the question, *How much do you enjoy reading?*, on the pre-survey boys indicated that reading was one of their favorite activities (70 percent said "I like reading") while others commented that they read if there is nothing else to do (29 percent). Overall, the data indicated that boys participating in Guys Read selected the book club because reading is something they like to do. For example, of the boys who signed up:

- 47 percent read print materials four or more hours a week.
- 22 percent read digital text four or more hours a week.
- 25 percent read for homework four or more hours per week.
- All read print.
- None indicated that they do not read.

About 40 percent of the club members reported that they had participated in previous book clubs. Most of the respondents reported a balance of activities they engaged in when *not reading*—in order of preference: spending time with friends (15 percent); playing sports (12 percent); playing video games (15 percent). Few reported watching television in their spare time. After participating in the book clubs, when asked which reasons influence their desire to read, a higher percentage of boys indicated that they like to read what friends are reading (33 percent).

Table 1. Results to the question, "How well do you *think* you read in comparison to other people your age?"

	Very Well		Better than Average		About Average		Not as Well	
Pre-survey (*n* = 76)	36	47 percent	21	28 percent	14	18 percent	5	7 percent
Post-survey (*n* = 36)	11	31 percent	10	28 percent	10	28 percent	5	14 percent

Table 2. Results to the question, "How do you *know* how well you read in comparison to other people your age?"

	Test Results Show Me		My Reading in School		My Parents		My Friends	
Pre-survey (*n* = 76)	38	50 percent	20	26 percent	13	17 percent	5	7 percent
Post-survey (*n* = 36)	15	42 percent	9	25 percent	8	22 percent	4	11 percent

Research Question #2

What are boys' perceptions about themselves as readers prior to and after participating in the Guys Read clubs? Before the clubs started, boys were asked to assess their reading skills as well as how they knew about their reading skills. (See tables 1 and 2.)

In line with results for the first research question, the boys generally believed themselves to be competent readers when coming into the clubs. Additionally, the book clubs had little impact on how participants defined their reading competence, with the impact of how reading is evaluated in school, by parents, or based on test results being most important.

Research Question #3

What books/materials do boys read and what impact on reading habits and choices do the Guys Read clubs have? In both the pre- and post-survey responses, the participants indicated that they read books about topics they are interested in. In the pre-survey, boys noted that they rely on recommendations from librarians for help in selecting books; but in the post-survey there was a shift, with the boys stating that they read what their friends are reading. This trend away from traditional book selection avenues (libraries and librarian recommendations) to peers may indicate the influence of the social nature of the book clubs on book choices. For book types, the boys indicated that they like books in a series (67 percent), fantasy books (59 percent), and comic books (45 percent). They stated that they were not fond of poetry (75 percent), graphic novels (46 percent), or history (41 percent).

Research Question #4

What perceptions do boys have of other males as readers prior to and after participating in the Guys Read book clubs and interacting with male book club leaders/mentors? The boys' pre-survey responses indicated that these boys believed girls read more than boys do. Reasons given for this response included the boys' belief that girls have more time: "Girls, because I think that they might not do as many activities as boys;" that "Girls are more academic;" and boys reporting seeing girls read: "because I see girls reading a lot in the library and other places."

A few boys indicated that boys and girls read the same or that boys read more than girls, but the post-survey responses included a greater number of boys stating that they read as much as or more than girls: "I think they read about the same;" "Boys like to read a lot too;" "Boys read more, or the same as girls."

Research Questions #5 and #6

What activities and structures associated with the Guys Read book clubs help boys find reading meaningful and worthwhile? What engages boys and supports their reading and completion of books over the course of the book clubs? Utilizing the qualitative data that was compiled from the observations of the book clubs, the research team noted several trends. The structure of the book clubs ranged from very structured to non-existent. There were a wide variety of book club activities, including boys pulling questions for book conversation from a bucket, planned activities focused around the book, and game playing. One important aspect of the book clubs was that refreshments were available.

The books read by the boys were predetermined by facilitators or librarians prior to book clubs' first meetings (see table 3).

The following excerpts from field note data provide descriptions of the book club sessions at two sites and indicate the similarity yet variety of activities and interactions that occurred.

Observation of Club A

[prior]: Boys socialized, ate snacks.

[Ten min.]: Facilitator-led questions about book.

[Ten min.]: Author's website projected onto wall using LCD projector. Low lights. Facilitator and boys surf the site; took online "quiz" about book; told jokes.

Table 3. Books Read During Summer 2006 Guys Read Book Clubs

The Lost Years of Merlin* Barron (1996)	**The Conch Bearer** Divakaruni (2005)	**Chasing the Falconers** Korman (2005)	**The Last Book in the Universe** Philbrick (2002)
The Wizard Test Bell (2006)	**Honus and Me** Gutman (1998)	**Midnight for Charlie Bone** Nimmo (2002)	**Truckers** Pratchett (2004)
Gregor the Overlander Collins (2004)	**Among the Hidden*** Haddix (2000)	**Colder than Ice** Patneaude (2005)	**Chew on This** Wilson & Schlosser (2006)
Gregor and the Prophecy of Bane Collins (2005)	**The Devil and His Boy** Horowitz (2004)	**How Angel Peterson Got His Name** Paulsen (2004)	**The Gadget** Zindel (2003)

* Series books (indicated favorites of the boys)

[Eight min.]: Discussion of mythology (related to text); map of constellations on wall; boys out of chairs pointing to constellations.

[Eight min.]: Facilitator illustrated (using projector) how to use library's catalogue to find more books in series.

[Ten min.]: Closing; tickler to get boys interested in book for next meeting; Guys Read clubs during school year promoted; high fives as boys leave.

Observation of Club E

[Seventeen min.]: Boys trickled in and gathered at snack table; found a place to sit.

[Forty-eight min.]: Book discussion. Facilitator passed around a bucket of questions created by librarian and facilitator. Boys drew questions out of bucket and took turns answering.

[Five min.]: Drawing for prizes; introduced book for next meeting; parents arrived; boys left.

Observations of book club sessions confirmed that reading was taken up as a social activity instead of an academic one. Included within the forty-five-minute sessions was social time, eating refreshments, jostling and joking, and small-group discussion time. These actions confirmed that the boys perceived the program as fun. Most boys came to the sessions prepared and willing to participate in the discussion. Questions discussed often included whether the boys liked the books and how they would react to certain situations presented in the books; boys could participate in most of the discussions even if they had not read the books. The overall depth of the discussion and the ability of the leader to sustain the discussion varied widely across sites and may be a function of the experience and comfort level of the facilitator.

Conversations with boys via interviews and focus groups revealed the importance boys placed on having fun and being exposed to books that they wanted to read. The following are quotes reflecting the boys' perceptions of the book clubs:

- "I thought that it [the book club] was going to be one of those boring things that some other libraries have, but this one was a lot more fun."
- "It [the book club] has helped me read better. I found some good books. I found some new stuff, like authors and types of books. I found that they have all the good books in the teen section."
- "Reading is more fun in a book club, definitely." "Yah, much funner."
- "After we finished discussing the book, we got to eat a snack, and we got to run around the room."

When the boys were asked *What was the best thing about the book club?*, they primarily mentioned enjoying discussions: "Talking to other kids about how they feel about books" and finding new books to read: "Reading the books. I liked the books they picked out." Boys also mentioned the importance of finding new books to read when they were asked about the biggest benefit of being in the book club: "I think the biggest benefit was realizing that there was more books than what I have read out there, and books that could be more interesting, new books." Mention of finding new books exceeded mention of food, but food was also a benefit of the book club: "The food, because I need food and I'm a growing man."

The benefit of finding new books to read appears in boys' responses to the question *How have you changed [as a reader]?* Two boys' comments represent the types of answers given: "I'm reading more. Every time I go to a library I pick up five books, and then I read them. So I think I read a lot more;" and "I'm reading more books, and I'm reading more fun books that I like. Before I was in book club I wasn't really reading books that I liked, I was only reading what I had to read."

Finally, when boys were asked *If you could change anything about the book club, what would you change?*, overwhelmingly their responses focused on wanting the book club to last longer and wanting to read more books: "Make it longer so we can read more books. I think we should read more than three books;" "I wish it would last about ten million times longer."

Conclusions

The research team was able to gather substantial and rich interview, focus group, and book club observation data, but the survey participation was an issue for this evaluation study. Boys' participation in evaluation activities was enhanced when

librarians and facilitators were able to encourage participants during the clubs to fill out the online survey.

This research provided the library system with valuable information and data regarding the impact its Guys Read program had on the boys who attended these summer book clubs. Boys reported that they read more after participating in Guys Read. The results enabled HCL to use this data internally as well as with its funders in order to enhance program offerings; improve clubs so that they are responsive to HCL's diverse communities; and procure continued and additional funding to support its Guys Read program.

More widely, the results of this study highlight how Guys Read book clubs can be positive, safe spaces for boys to be readers, a model from which other libraries can work in attending to their younger, male constituents and their parents and guardians, thereby helping encourage a life-long love of reading.

Update

Since the first evaluation in 2006, we continued to work with HCL through the summer of 2008, at which point HCL had more than doubled the number of Guys Read book clubs it offered during the summer. Scieszka's Guys Read program continues to offer support for boys' reading as evidenced by Scieszka's website, including his map of available Guys Read clubs (www.guysread.com/more/maps). Seventeen HCL libraries offered Guys Read book clubs in summer 2016.[16]

In addition to their Guys Read book clubs, HCL also offers mixed-gender book clubs and genre-based mixed-gender book clubs.[17] As Lauren Kewley, communication project coordinator at HCL, explained, "At HCL, Guys Read was a point-in-time model based on a national movement, with a focus on high-interest books, and interactive and social discussions. We learned a lot from that model and have continued to apply that to our book clubs for kids. Increasingly, we're offering genre- and interest-based book clubs, rather than gender-based. The goal of these book clubs continues to be supporting readers and engaging kids in summer learning."[18]

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Now Playing . . .

Using Podcasts and Kidcasts in the Library

KITTY FELDE AND PAMELA ROGERS

Cy and Chloe recording the podcast, "Buttons & Figs."

Podcasts created for kids, and often by kids, are quickly growing in number, scope, and popularity. The list of recommended podcasts on Zooglobble, a kids' music and audio review site, has grown to include almost eighty. And podcasts for kids, also called "kidcasts," are not just for earphones and home speakers.

Podcasts for kids are taking the stage. *Ear Snacks*, hosted by professional "kindie" (kid-indie) musicians, recently performed at the San Francisco Public Library and at San Francisco's Recess Urban Recreation Center. *Book Club for Kids* tapes live shows at book festivals all across the eastern seaboard. *The Secret Diaries of Tara Tremendous*, superhero adventure stories produced by Wonkybot Studios, was even turned into a Broadway musical.

And now podcasts are turning up in the library. *Buttons & Figs*, a librarian-hosted podcast about nonsense literature, will be part of the summer reading fun at the Oak Park (IL) Public Library, where kids can record a joke, tell a story, or simply make a silly sound effect to be featured in an upcoming episode.

Parents and caregivers are increasingly turning to libraries to help their kids succeed in school. Podcasts for kids can be another arrow in the quiver for librarians, as listening leads to better learning. In an August 2016 *NeverEnding Search* blog post, *School Library Journal* noted that "kids actually listen more attentively than most adults—they listen to understand, to retain, and to do something relating to what they learn."[1]

Kathleen Scalise and Marie Felde, authors of the book *Why Neuroscience Matters in the Classroom*, say podcasts target those "more likely to pop in earbuds than pull out a library card." They argue that listening to podcasts can, "in a unique and satisfying way, [support] literacy, reading, and representation of language in the brain."[2] How, then, can libraries engage these earbud-wearing kids?

Kitty Felde *is host and executive producer of the* Book Club for Kids *podcast. She's a public radio veteran, an award-winning playwright, and middle grade novelist.* Book Club for Kids *began as a segment on Felde's award-winning public radio talk show. It launched as a podcast in 2015. The Literacy Network of Greater Los Angeles honored the show with its Literacy in Media award.* ***Pamela Rogers*** *is a children's librarian and host and producer of* Buttons & Figs, *a podcast for kids about nonsense literature.* Buttons & Figs *began in September 2016 and is co-hosted by Sarah Torbey, also a children's librarian. The podcast was started as a way to share great works of nonsense and to inspire kids to create nonsense of their own. Pamela is also a consultant and trainer on topics such as ALA's Every Child Ready to Read, early literacy, family engagement, and leadership.*

Programming with Kidcasts

Children's library services have always engaged children through stories. Kidcasts can fit seamlessly into existing library programming or even inspire new programming.

For the youngest patrons, here are some ways to incorporate podcasts.

- Play a story, such as "Dazzling Dinosaurs" from the *Story Time* podcast produced by Bedtime FM, during storytime. Share information for parents or caregivers about how to keep listening at home, in the car, or wherever they are.

- Create a flannel board or pull out some puppets and play "The Cat Who Caught the Moon" from *Stories Podcast*, "Little Fox" from *Little Stories for Tiny People*, or "Hot Tea and Warm Rugs" from *Baalgatha*, a podcast sharing Indian stories in English and Hindi. Act out the story along with the audio.

- Why not include a song from a podcast in your storytime? There are many great kidcasts with original music, including *Sugarcrash Kids*; *Spare the Rock, Spoil the Child*; *Ear Snacks*; *April Eight*; *Chloe's Friendship Circle*; and *Space Station Kiwi*.

Or, to engage school-age kids, consider these tips.

- Your library likely hosts a book club, so how about a pod club for middle school students? Kids could share their own "picks of the week"—episodes from their favorite podcasts.

- Use a podcast to launch a book club discussion. Host a pod or book club where the books are selected from the ones discussed on the podcast *Book Club for Kids*. During the meetings, play some of the discussions and interviews, allowing time for the kids to discuss their own thoughts and the thoughts of those on the episode.

- Create a mystery podcast club. Play an episode from the scripted serial podcast *The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel* and have the club try to guess what will happen next at the end of each meeting.

Along with the explosion in STEM and STEAM programming, podcasts offer a great resource to inspire curiosity and further inquiry-based thinking as part of your programs.

Take a topic from a science podcast and enhance your programs.

- Host a STEM podcast program series. Select inquiry-based episodes for each program, such as the *Tumble* episode, "The Secrets of Bugs and Bats," which includes kid questions like, "Why is it good for bugs to have six legs instead of four?" or "Why do mosquitoes drink blood?" Stop the episode and ask the kids what they think. Discuss their ideas and then play the answer. Actual bugs on site are optional.

Recording a podcast is a lot of fun!

- Another great podcast for this type of open dialogue programming is *But Why?*, which has episodes such as "How Do Popcorn Kernels Pop?" You could even serve popcorn as the kids toss around their own hypotheses. Then, play the answer. Brace yourself for when they find out they're eating endosperm. You can continue this type of guessing game along with the rest of these episodes.

- Host a program about dinosaurs and play the *Brains On!* episode "Dinosaur Bones: How Do We Know Their Age?" while kids make an amber craft using glass stones and pictures of different types of dinosaur bones. Invite an educator from a local nature center or a local paleontologist with actual amber specimens to view. Encourage everyone to check out those great dinosaur books in your collection.

- Host a STEAM maker program series by playing a two-minute episode from *Science Underground* such as "Can We Make a Transporter?" For this one, offer a lot of different recycled electronic materials and boxes and challenge the kids to design a transporter that won't break you apart on the other end! You can also select maker projects from the book *Maker Lab: 28 Super Cool Projects* by Jack Challoner and share an interview with the author from the podcast *The Show about Science*, hosted by Nate, a six-year-old who loves science.

Many librarians are ahead of the game, discovering ways to make podcasts part of their reading programs. Jenny Shanker, librarian at Gunston Middle School in Arlington, Virginia, says students at a number of mid-Atlantic schools have been issued tablets. Teachers and librarians are scrambling to find creative ways to use them.

It was her suggestion that the *Book Club for Kids* podcast create QR codes (those funny-looking, black-and-white, patterned squares) for each episode. You open the QR reader app on your

Recommended Kidcasts

Search for kidcasts by name or find them on iTunes, Stitcher, or SoundCloud.

- *The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian*
- *April Eight Songs and Stories*
- *Baalgatha: Bedtime Stories for Kids*
- *Book Club for Kids*
- *Brains On!*
- *Buttons & Figs*
- *But Why?*
- *Chloe's Friendship Circle*
- *Ear Snacks*
- *Little Stories for Tiny People*
- *Science Underground*
- *Short & Curly*
- *The Show about Science*
- *Space Station Kiwi*
- *Spare the Rock, Spoil the Child*
- *Stories Podcast*
- *Story Time*
- *Sugarcrash Kids*
- *The Secret Diaries of Tara Tremendous*
- *Tumble*
- *The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel*
- *What If World*

Visit Zooglobble for more great recommends.

phone or tablet, point the device's camera at the code, and it takes you to a website with more information, or in this case, to a podcast.

Shanker suggests that librarians print out the QR codes (available for free from *Book Club for Kids*) and paste each one to the back cover of a book discussed in a particular podcast. Students scan the back of the book with the QR reader app on their tablets and can immediately listen to the twenty-minute podcast. This hopefully inspires them to want to know more about the book . . . which they will already have in their hands.

There's no reason QR codes can't be used the same way for science, music, or storytelling podcasts.

- If a *Tumble* science podcast is talking about trash in the ocean, why not create your own QR code for the episode (tools to do this are available at a number of free websites) and attach it to a copy of *Plastic, Ahoy!: Investigating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch* by Patricia Newman and Annie Crawley?

- Want to turn that frequently checked-out copy from the Harry Potter series into a discussion about ethics? Create a QR code for the Australian ethics podcast *Short & Curly* episode, "Is Dumbledore as Great as He Seems?"

- Want to extend your "letters" storytime theme? Create a QR code for the *Ear Snacks* episode "Letters" and display it near your alphabet books or on an *Ear Snacks* CD in your collection.

- If the *April Eight* songs and stories podcast is talking about the joys of winter, play a segment from the episode "Snowflakes" during your storytime and hand out some bells so attendees can shake and listen. Have a QR code posted in your storytime area so families can listen to April's beautiful voice on their way home.

Want to take it one step further? Create your own kidcast. Jose Rodriguez teaches at the Ambassador School of Global Education in Los Angeles, a public school built on the site of the old Ambassador Hotel. Rodriguez says he's created podcasts in the classroom over the years to reinforce the learning.

One special series was on environmental issues, leading up to Earth Day. His new project, a lunchtime club called Globe Trotter Radio, will create podcasts to help his students learn more about geography and world cultures.

Kidcast Reference

Children's librarians are uniquely situated to help with curating kids' podcasts and referring patrons to listen and engage with them. Librarians can create evaluation tools to confidently point parents, caregivers, educators, and other librarians toward high-quality podcasts for kids and their families.

Kidcasts tackle everything from ethics to literature to science. But how can librarians help parents and caregivers find these great podcasts for young listeners?

- Jennifer Norborg and Anne Bensfield, librarians with Oak Park Public Library, had the great idea to host a podcast petting zoo. The library set up a program room where kids and adults could come in and sample snippets from various podcasts. Each iPad or computer station had a placard listing information about the podcast and the target age for the show, and a pair of headphones for listening to a bit of a selected episode. Based on their discoveries, one family might want to continue listening to the sci-fi serial podcast *The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian* to find out what aliens Finn will encounter next. A middle-school kid might want to tune in to the next episode of the serial *The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel* to find out why Mars's mother is acting so strangely when his middle school friends ask why he was missing from school. Or an imaginative child might be inspired to call the podcast *What If World* and tune in later when Mr. Eric creates a special episode inspired by his or her question.

- The Poudre River Public Library District in Ft. Collins, Colorado, includes a link to *Book Club for Kids* on the homework page of its website and the Madison (WI) Public Library

posted a list of kidcasts recommended by a kid listener on their library blog.

- Put a curated list of kidcasts on the iPads or computers in your library and share the list with families at check-out.

But how can libraries be confident about which kidcasts they recommend to parents and caregivers? Look for reviews and member organizations defining and advocating for high-quality content for kids, and find a seat "at the table" so you can be a part of defining what that means too. Here are just a few:

- Members of Kids Listen (www.kidslisten.org), a grassroots advocacy organization of kidcasters, are defining and promoting high-quality audio content for children. They are transparent about their mission to build best practices around the medium.

- Zooglobble is a high-quality review site for kids' indie music, audio, and now kidcasts. They have compiled one of the most comprehensive kid podcast lists available.

- Subscribe to a few kidcasts yourself and listen!

Join the podcast revolution! Listen, share, connect, recommend, and promote kid voices, kid ideas, and kid content by programming and promoting kidcasts at your library. &

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Ready to Read Indeed!

Luke is right at home with his Eric Carle books, and he's only nine months old! That's no surprise—his mom is Brooke Newberry, a children's librarian at La Crosse (WI) Public Library. *CAL* would love to feature more great photos displaying early literacy and kids. If you have one to share, please email to editor Sharon Verbeten at CALeditor@yahoo.com.

Illustrator Extraordinaire

Bechtel Fellow Enthralled by Arthur Rackham

BRIDGID MANGAN

"He Could See Undine beneath the Crystal Vault."

> *"There, on my cousin's drawing room table I found the very book . . . which I had never dared to hope I should see,* Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham. His pictures, which seemed to me then to be the very music made visible, plunged me a few fathoms deeper into my delight. I have seldom coveted anything as I coveted that book . . . I knew I could never rest until it was mine."*[1]

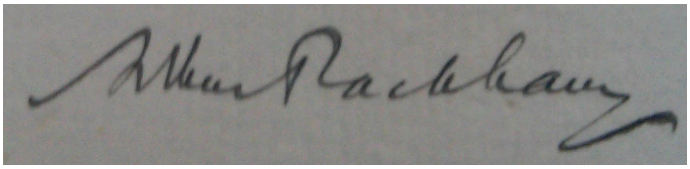
These are the words of a young C. S. Lewis, who was deeply impressed by the "tender, flickering light of imagination"[2] conveyed in the watercolor images by Rackham, the late nineteenth-century artist. Upon entering the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature at the University of Florida, I felt the same anticipation and excitement. There was a shelf of first-edition books, some signed by Rackham himself, awaiting my perusal. As a recipient of the 2016 Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship, I had been awarded an exceptional opportunity to explore the works of one of the most admired and influential illustrators of all time.

Many of the books I reviewed were special editions that had been published to be given as gifts. These books contained a combination of black pen-and-ink drawings and color plates. Color plates were printed individually, adhered to thick pages, and then covered with tissue paper. In the early twentieth century, color plates were printed using a new technique called the three-color process. Advances in photographic and printing technologies allowed a full-color original image to be separated into three images, each in a primary color, and then printed very much like the original by using ink in each color.

The first book I delved into was *Undine*,[3] the tale of a water spirit living in the Danube who fell in love with a mortal. I had seen several of Rackham's illustrations from *Undine*, but never in their entirety. I was thrilled to be able to pore over this book, more than a century old, that had been signed by Rackham. As I gently turned the tissue paper pages that covered the color

Bridgid Mangan *is a children's librarian who was employed by the District of Columbia Public Library until January 2017. This article is based on her March 2016 visit to the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature at the University of Florida as part of winning the 2016 Bechtel Fellowship.*

Rackham books.



Arthur Rackham's signature in a copy of *Undine*.

plates, it was hard to contain my excitement at seeing these illustrations for the first time. The images, drawn with fine black ink lines and painted with vivid watercolors, displayed such lively motion: Undine descending into the Danube, its cresting waves forming faces around her, and being welcomed back to her aquatic home by swirling fish.

The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie and *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods* were the next tomes I perused.[4] This was the two-volume saga of the Rhinemaidens, who lost their gold to the Nibelung Alberich. The great god Wotan summons his daughter, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde, to reclaim the cursed ring and take it with her into an enchanted sleep, so that it may never harm another. Siegfried awakens Brünnhilde, and she falls in love with him.

Siegfried continues to seek adventure, and the ring remains with Brünnhilde. On his travels, Siegfried meets the compelling Gutrune. Upon discovering she has been awakened, a sister Valkyrie urges Brünnhilde to rid herself of the blighted ring. By now it is too late, and the ring has already doomed the lovers. Siegfried is killed, and Brünnhilde, mounted on her horse, throws herself on his funeral pyre.

As I completed my review of the book, I could see why it must have captivated a young C. S. Lewis. This thrilling story, with its elements of Norse mythology, contained matchless images of impeccable detail. I could understand Lewis's delight at being able to examine his cousin's copy at his leisure, and his quest to obtain a personal copy to have close at hand.

While at the Baldwin Library, I immersed myself in fifty first-edition books illustrated by Rackham. Some were popular titles, such as *Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, *Gulliver's Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*, *Aesop's Fables*, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Rip Van Winkle*,

"Soon She Was Lost to Sight in the Danube."

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, *The Romance of King Arthur*, and *Edgar Allan Poe's Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. Some lesser-known titles I contemplated were *The Allies' Fairy Book*, *Comus*, *Peer Gynt*, *Feats on the Fjord*, *Ingoldsby Legends*, *Poor Cecco*, and *The Zankiwank and the Bletherwitch*.

I pored over exquisite depictions of beautiful and grotesque creatures, majestic beasts, playful and proud fairies, and enchanted anthropomorphic trees for hours on end. I was utterly captivated by all of the works. Then I came upon the book I knew I must have as my own.

I have always loved William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[5] When its four human protagonists enter the forest and encounter Puck, the mischievous trickster, and the majestic Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, I yearn to follow into their enchanted realm. In their domain, fairies are always near, but they don't always let you see them. You have to look out of the corner of your eye, like looking at a star.

"Siegfried Hands the Drinking Horn Back to Gutrune and Gazes at Her with Sudden Passion."

As I examined these pictures, I perceived more and more fairies. They were peeking from behind trees and under tree roots, singing at the edge of a stream, gathering in a wind-swept field. I marveled over the scene of Titania cradling Bottom in her arms, the fairies lighting softly glowing lanterns at their feet, while she murmured, "Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms."

Gazing over the shimmering spectacle of Titania and Oberon's ball was like recalling a vision from a dream. The wonder I felt at being received into the fairies' dominion made me long for the book, so that I could join them whenever I wished. I have since obtained my own copy, and I never tire of entering the extraordinary, wondrous world created by Rackham.

As a child, I spent hours looking at Brian Froud and Alan Lee's *Faeries*.[6] Their "field guide" and history of the fae sparked my fascination with magical creatures and their worlds. It inspired me to read such fantasy classics as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Fellowship of the Ring*. I would play in the forest behind my house with my senses on high alert in order to catch a glimpse of a fairy or a snippet of her song. As an adult, I discovered the works of Arthur Rackham, and immediately saw how his illustrations had influenced and inspired Froud and Lee.

I was thrilled to have won the Bechtel fellowship, which would give me the opportunity to browse first-edition books illustrated by Rackham at my leisure. I would be able to see firsthand the works that had such a huge impact on Froud and Lee, whose own work had held me in thrall as a child. I was in awe at the fortuity of going to the source of my enthrallment with enchanted creatures and magical worlds.

During my time at the Baldwin Library, I learned that the preservation of historical children's books is a vital necessity. It enabled me, as the librarian I am today and as the child who searched for fairies in the forest, to see the strong interconnection between illustrations dating back more than a century and modern works. Rackham's illustrations, relevant after all these years, are still featured in many children's books in public libraries all over the world.

Today's children will become the new generation of readers who seek to immerse themselves in books that will transport them to enchanted worlds. They will walk in the forest, eager to hear a fairy's melody or see the flash of her glimmering wings. &

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Community Art Academy

A Public/University Library Collaboration

BRYNA BOBICK AND JENNIFER HORNBY

Puppets based on Dr. Seuss displayed at the Community Art Academy Celebration.

In early 2016, the Memphis (TN) Public Library and Information Center collaborated with The University of Memphis's art education faculty and undergraduate students on the Community Art Academy. Twenty-three youth, ages nine to twelve, participated in the six-week program, which was funded by the public library's Friends group. (The budget of eight hundred dollars covered the cost of the art supplies, snacks, closing reception, sketchbooks for the participants, and T-shirts for the participants, library staff, and faculty.)

The goal was to provide participants a free, high-quality art program that supported literacy development and included visual arts and language arts integration every week.

The theme of the 2016 Community Art Academy was Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Music (STEAM). STEAM was incorporated into the weekly lessons through art projects, which included watercolor painting, puppets, bookmaking, collage, and ceramics.

The art students avoided giving too much information or too many instructions to the participants. Instead, they created an environment that included a hands-on demonstration, provided answers to specific questions, and supported the participants throughout the art lessons.

Library staff shared their expertise on children's literature and suggested specific books relating to each studio art activity to the university students, incorporating literature into the studio art activities. For example, books by Dr. Seuss were showcased and read prior to the puppet art activity. The participants then used the Seuss characters as springboards to create puppets. Participants were encouraged to develop their own art-making skills, and our goal was to provide the environment and circumstances in which learning and art making could take place.

We felt it was appropriate to engage community members and display all of the completed art projects from the Community Art Academy at a closing art reception, held in the library's art gallery. During the reception, each participant received a sketchbook, a children's fiction book, and a certificate of participation. The reception was videotaped by WYPL, the library's radio reading service and television station, and later broadcasted on local television.

In Their Own Words

Both students and faculty found the program beneficial; here are a few comments received.

One art education student said, "I was able to experience teaching in a non-school setting, yet I was also able to practice classroom management and plan an art lesson."

***Bryna Bobick**, EdD, is Associate Professor of Art Education at The University of Memphis. **Jennifer Hornby** is Children Services Coordinator at Memphis Public Library and Information Center.*

Another added, "Without the traditional constraints of the classroom, the instruction felt natural, and the participants were excited to work on the projects each week."

A library site leader added,

> The University of Memphis Community Art Academy initiative was engaging and an all-around great experience. . . . One benefit was utilizing books for creating art. Other benefits of this initiative were that it helped the students develop [their] own creative process[es]. In addition, it increased awareness and capacity to recognize their own interests and individual talents. Moreover, the student teachers were beneficial as they motivated the students, enhanced enthusiasm, and instilled confidence.

Program Impact

All parties felt the benefits of the partnership were mutual. The children's librarians received professional development in visual arts instruction, which will be useful in planning future programs. Also, the Community Art Academy provided an opportunity for the library to perform outreach to the community and The University of Memphis via the visual arts.

The university students received authentic field experience in a community setting prior to graduation, and university faculty provided feedback prior to the art lesson. The feedback given prior to the lesson included logistics for art supply distribution to the participants, specific books that could be included in the lessons, and icebreakers for the university

students to include when teaching the community art academy participants. The experiences helped the university students build bonds in the community and strengthen their teaching skills, and it gave them the tools to replicate this program after graduation.

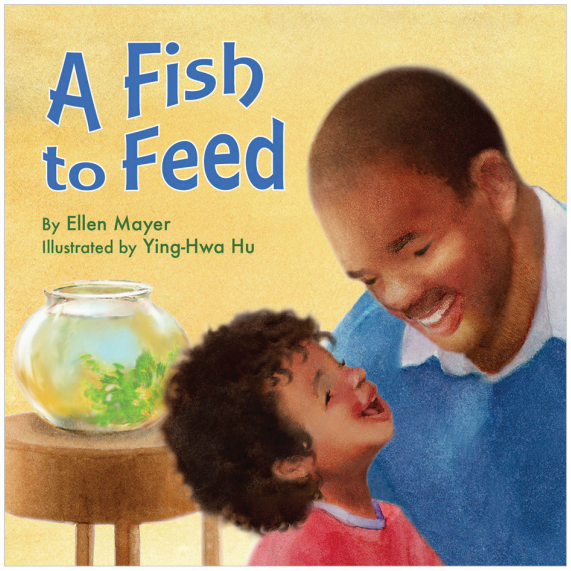
The Community Art Academy allowed students from various schools to participate in art activities and foster friendships, and we plan on offering it again in 2017.

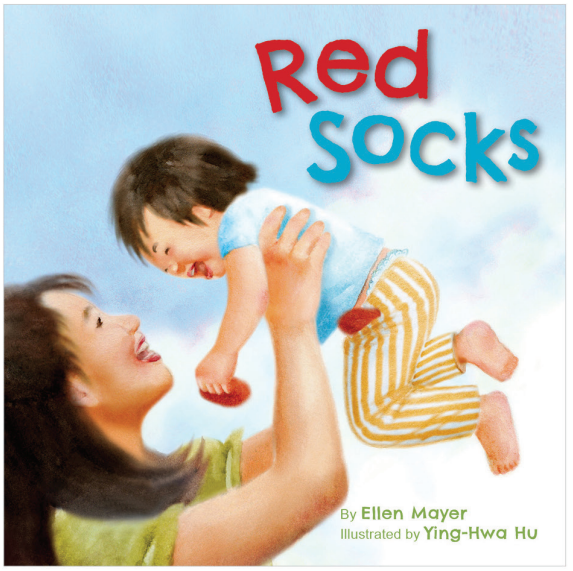
We encourage library staff and university faculty to consider implementing aspects of the Community Art Academy into their partnerships. It will take time, but we believe libraries are vital and relevant locations for arts-based partnerships. &

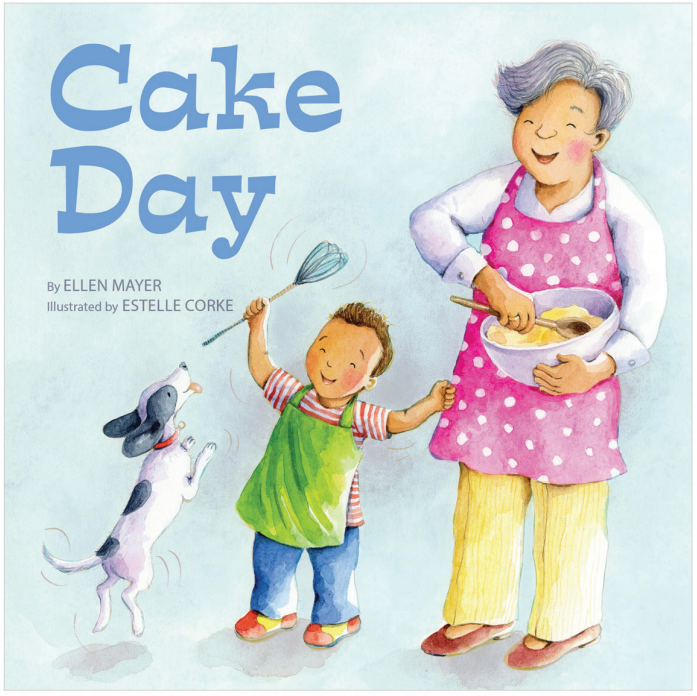
Program Planning Tips

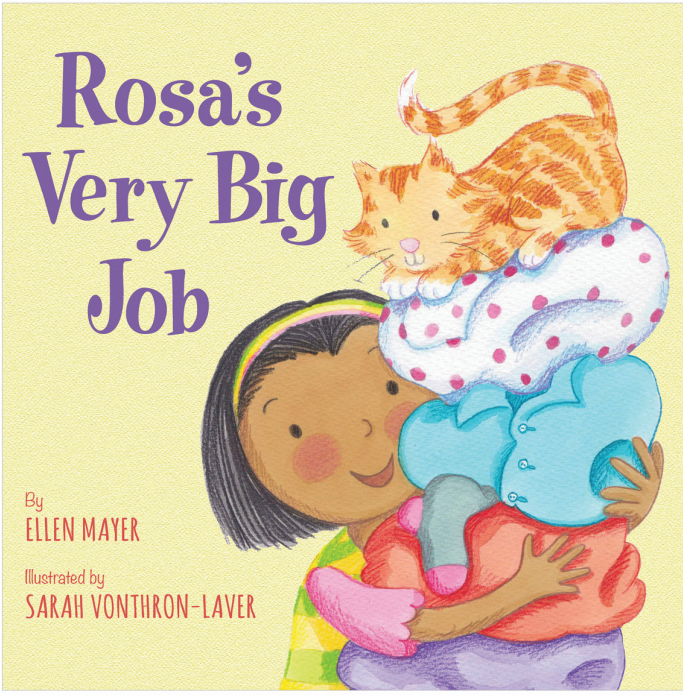
Based on our planning experiences, we offer these tips for those planning similar partnerships and programs.

- Start planning early, and remember it is OK to start with a small partnership. The important thing is library staff and university faculty and students are willing to partner. It will take time, but we believe the results are worth the effort.
- Establish roles, expectations, and responsibilities for all participants.
- Recruit participants from various schools and community locations.
- When planning any art lesson, it is helpful for the instructors to be comfortable and secure with all aspects of the lesson and be familiar with the participants' backgrounds and art abilities.
- Seek funding from outside sources.
- Be flexible, and always be prepared. For example, participants may finish early or arrive late.
- Document and showcase program results, sharing on social media and with the community.









Building Better Brains

Board Books and Thirty Million Words

JARRETT DAPIER

When our daughter was two, she gnawed half the cover off a board book version of Peggy Rathmann's *Goodnight, Gorilla*. To her, it was a book good enough to eat. Our copy—tattered, weathered, *gnawed*—remains on our bookshelf. To my wife and me, the mangled little thing is a treasured possession.

It would be impossible to tally up the number of hours we spent during my daughter's first three years reading through Rathmann's nearly wordless book. Nor could I estimate how many words we expended in our conversations about the images on the pages while we read.

What stays with me is how loving, connected, and tender I felt towards my daughter as she sat in my arms, both of us laughing as the gorilla climbs into bed and wakes up the zookeeper's wife. I still recall the sound of her voice as she cried, "Gorilla! What did you do?!?" And me replying, "Sorry!" in the Gorilla's voice, her hand then playfully slapping the cardboard page with delight.

Neither of these lines—"Gorilla! What did you do?!?" "Sorry!"—are in Rathmann's text, but they, and my daughter's page slaps, represent the kind of improvised call and response that naturally occurs between parents and children as they page through books together. And it turns out, according to research on baby and toddler brain development from organizations like Thirty Million Words, where I recently worked; Providence Talks; and other commendable early language research groups, these free-flowing interactions are critical to the healthy brain development of kids.

As parent and child connect meaningfully with each other, whether through acts of reading, talking, singing, or even nodding and smiling, during those earliest "neuroplastic" years, the child's brain is establishing life-long connections that will vastly increase her intellectual and verbal capacities.

Author Ellen Mayer understands these things and has penned four smart picturebooks—*Red Socks, A Fish to Feed* (both published as board books), *Cake Day*, and *Rosa's Very Big Job*—to facilitate meaningful parent-child interactions. These are potentially groundbreaking books as each title provides a note to parents written by language and literacy expert Dr. Betty Bardige about the importance of talk and how to use what's occurring in each story to launch meaningful interactions between parents and kids while reading them aloud. They are also important books for their soothing illustrations, which pointedly feature characters of color, still far too underrepresented in early literacy children's literature.

Mayer's books each depict an adult and a child embarking on a simple task—visiting a store to buy a fish, getting dressed—and model through each story how even the simple, routine moments in our day are rich with opportunities to talk and connect with our children.

In *Red Socks*, the mother character names colors, provides descriptions, and offers spatial observations, all examples of how we can help children name, measure, and know their world.

"Let's see what else is in the laundry basket. Here is your red sock. UH-OH! Where is the other red sock? You found the other red sock! Yay! It was hiding in your pants pocket!"[1]

In *A Fish to Feed*, a sweet book in which a father and son go shopping for a fish and carry it home, the board book is constructed with holes in the pages that children will enjoy playing with and looking through. The text shows how shopping, something we all do with kids, is a rich opportunity to talk. "There are so many things in this store," says Dad. "What do you see?"[2]

Mayer's latest books are equally successful in exemplifying parent-child talk. In *Cake Day*, the title becomes a fun refrain as a grandmother and her grandson bake a cake. In *Rosa's Very Big Job*, a preschooler and her grandfather create exciting adventures out of household chores.

Bardige avoids overly wonky language in her notes to parents and focuses on the everyday. "*Cake Day* shows some simple, research-based techniques that can help develop your child's language. . . As you do chores around the house . . . it's a wonderful time to talk together!" writes Bardige.[3] This mixture of read-aloud, talk modeling for parents, and information from Bardige make Mayer's books delightful, instructive little packages.

Now that neuroscience is fast catching up to proving what many parents, librarians, and caregivers have always known—that talk has a huge influence on brain development in children up to five years old—publishers should consider including notes like Bardige's in future editions of early literacy books. New parents reading classics like *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats; *Ten, Nine, Eight* by Molly Bang; *Goodnight, Gorilla*; or new favorites like *Journey* by Aaron Becker; *Kitten's First Full*

Jarrett Dapier *is a former research coordinator at the Thirty Million Words Initiative at the University of Chicago. He received the 2016 American Library Association John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award for his research into censorship in Chicago Public Schools. He holds an MLIS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is currently a young adult librarian at Skokie Public Library in Skokie, Illinois.*

Moon by Kevin Henkes; and *Roadwork* by Sally Sutton will benefit from advice on how to read and talk about the texts with their young children.

Children's librarians and baby daycare providers are particularly encouraged to add books by Mayer and other authors committed to boosting parent-child talk to their early literacy/board book collections. In her book *Engaging Babies in the Library: Putting Theory into Practice*, published by ALA Editions, researcher and former children's librarian Debra J. Knoll writes that given what we increasingly know about baby brain development, the importance of meaningful interactions with children under five, and the myriad ways socioeconomic status impacts these things, "libraries should consider providing focused service most intensively to babies and toddlers."[4]

Part of that work, she recommends, is "advocat[ing] for the publication of books that will expand babies' and toddlers' growing vocabulary base."[5] In *Rosa's Very Big Job*, Mayer intentionally gives young Rosa and her grandfather big words like "dangerous" and "enormous" to describe their adventures because, as Bardige writes in her note for parents at the end, "children love big words . . . adults can introduce big words when they talk with preschoolers" and they don't need a dictionary to do it.[6]

To Knoll, partnering with parents to support healthy brain development for all kids must be a top priority of library service in 2016 and beyond. Librarians can emphasize to parents and caregivers who visit the library and attend baby storytime programs the importance of tuning in, talking more, and taking turns, as Dr. Dana Suskind puts it in her book *Thirty Million Words*.

Librarians can also point to the simple, easily replicated interactions between characters in Mayer's books as examples of how exactly to do it. They can emphasize, through the example of the father in *A Fish to Feed* or the grandmother in *Cake Day*, that every moment of the day, no matter how routine (shopping for groceries, cooking dinner, walking down the block), is rich with potential for talk.

Providing circulating copies of these books—and recommending them!—could spur parents to provide more word-rich homes full of connections and meaning. Every child deserves as much.

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4. Debra J. Knoll, "Engaging Babies in the Library: Putting Theories into Practice," *American Libraries*, May 31, 2016, https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2016/05/31/engaging-babies-library-childrens-librarians.
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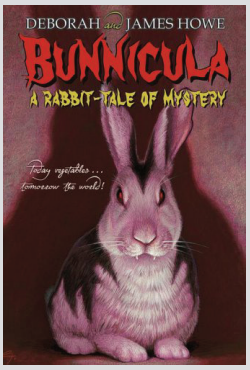
Howe Honored with Empire State Award



James Howe, the author of more than ninety children's books, has been awarded the 2017 Empire State Award for Excellence in Literature for Young People. He will be honored by the New York State Library Association this November.

New York resident Howe is best known for Bunnicula, the vampire rabbit character he created in 1979; that first of several Bunnicula books won more than ten Children's Choice Awards.

This fall, Howe's personal essay, "How Miracles Begin," will be published in the young adult anthology about music, *Behind the Song*, edited by K. M. Walton. Two more of Howe's Houndsley and Catina books are due out in 2018 and 2019, and the author is working on a memoir and a graphic novel version of *Bunnicula*.

The first winner of the Empire State Award, in 1990, was Maurice Sendak; last year's winner was Steve Sheinkin. The award honors a body of work that represents excellence in and that has made a significant contribution to literature for young people. It is presented to a living author or illustrator currently residing in New York.

Pre-K Partnership

How One Library and One Public School Increased Parent Engagement

KRISTEN ROCHA ALDRICH

Pre-K seems to be the new kindergarten. Parents and caregivers are faced with increasing pressure to ensure their children are school ready.

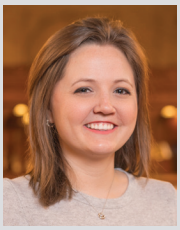
Every parent and caregiver possesses these skills; however, a little extra support and guidance can go a long way in a child's literacy development. Pre-K is a great place for children to build and learn new literacy and social emotional skills. Teachers are there to help the families begin navigating the school system and to give their children the building blocks to become successful lifelong learners. However, this process begins long before a child enters school. Often, the first time children and families are exposed to these skills is at their local library, either through activities geared towards families or through partnerships with pre-K and daycare classrooms.

In New York City, even with various schools and daycares within walking distance of the New York Public Library's (NYPL) eighty-eight branches in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island, forming consistent partnerships with schools and daycares can be difficult. Conducting outreach to teachers requires a delicate balance of emphasizing the many services the library offers without being too pushy. And of course, every school and daycare is different—some are welcoming and others never respond to calls or emails. Despite the mixed responses I have received when conducting outreach, there is always one aspect of the library that seems to pique teachers' interests.

Libraries are uniquely positioned as a community anchor and already have the trust of families. Librarians and library staff build lasting connections with each patron who walks in the door. Often, librarians watch children grow from infants at baby storytime into high school students using the library's resources to write research papers. They know the child's interests—they probably even helped the child discover some interests—as well as the family's larger concerns. This familiarity grows out of the type of trust and support a school cannot regularly give to every student and family. It is the foundation of the type of relationship our libraries are founded on.

In early summer 2015, I met with pre-K teacher Nancy Jalowiecki, after Inwood Library Branch Manager Danita Nichols said that Nancy had been using the library for classroom resources. Danita thought the two of us would have a lot to talk about given our shared passion for early childhood education. Fortunately for me, Nancy welcomed the library with open arms.

One of the first things we discussed was parent engagement among her class and the other four pre-K classes at her school, which Nancy described as extremely low. Later, in working with the Department of Education (DOE), we confirmed that parent engagement throughout the city's universal pre-K program, "Pre-K for All," was often lacking. Around the same time, I attended an "Every Child Ready to Read 2" training with



Kristen Rocha Aldrich *is the Manager of Early Childhood Education at the New York Public Library. She has worked in educational library programming for four years. Prior to working in public libraries, she worked for the Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia. She is currently serving as a member of ALSC's Early Childhood Programs and Services committee.*

A mother and her daughter spend time at a coloring themed passport station to work on the daughter's fine motor skills.

instructor Saroj Ghoting, and began looking for a way to reach parents through family literacy workshops. After speaking with Nancy, it occurred to me that NYPL was the perfect match for her school, PS 98.

The Inwood Library piloted a family literacy workshop series at PS 98 starting in October 2015, which ran for eight months throughout the school year and began again in fall 2016. The library visits on the first Wednesday of each month for thirty-five minutes at the 8:10 a.m. drop-off time.

While the students are eating breakfast in the cafeteria, the library provides breakfast and coffee for the parents and caregivers as they listen to the library staff and the pre-K teachers co-deliver a bilingual (English/Spanish) workshop. The content is based on a parent survey the school conducts the previous year, eliciting the topics for which the parents need more support when helping their children outside of school.

Nancy and I co-developed and delivered all of the content, along with Inwood's children's librarian, Rachel Skinner-O'Neill. Topics include Creating a Literacy-Friendly Household, Free Neighborhood Resources, Language and Child Development, Math and Literacy, and Getting Ready for Kindergarten. At the end of each session, parents and caregivers are given a bilingual handout of the topic covered to take home and practice with their child.

At the first session, we focused on creating a community of parents and caregivers by asking them to get to know and support one another. This set the tone for the school year. We also gave out Early Literacy Kits, which included tip sheets, an *ABC Read with Me in NYC* book, a growth chart, and a branch event calendar.

The last session was a celebration, honoring the parents' and caregivers' commitment to their children's learning. Each family was given a picturebook and school supplies. Nancy also developed certificates of completion for each parent and caregiver who participated in five or more workshops.

While the content shared at each of the workshops was not groundbreaking, the two most frequent comments we received were:

1. Parents and caregivers were thrilled to hear that the simple things they already do, like talking to their child on the subway, are actually helping their child learn and grow. Their parenting skills are validated.

2. They felt empowered to know they don't have to be an education expert to give their child the tools needed for success.

It is amazing, for example, to watch a room full of parents and caregivers first recite the words of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," and then sing it to demonstrate how singing helps their child develop phonological awareness. So simple, yet incredibly effective.

After the workshops, the librarians frequently follow up with class visits for storytimes. After school, the families can also visit the library to browse and check out books. The library's designated Pre-K for All Book Corner houses all of the books from the DOE's Pre-K for All Units of Study booklists, which NYPL co-created with the DOE. Thus, the library provides a holistic approach by supporting parents and caregivers, providing literacy activities directly to the children, and inviting families back to the library to supplement their children's learning at school through further access to resources and literacy programming.

Last school year, between thirty and fifty parents and caregivers consistently attended each workshop. In the 2015–2016 school year, parent engagement for PS 98 pre-K classrooms increased by thirty-six percent, which the school attributed solely to the new partnership with NYPL.

There are similar numbers of parents and caregivers participating this school year as well. The content of the workshops was edited to include interactive activities for each workshop and increase the focus on child development and kindergarten readiness, a request made by the parents and caregivers.

As I began sharing this partnership success with colleagues throughout NYPL, and as more branches were required to offer family literacy workshops, many branches were quick to adapt the Inwood/PS 98 partnership model into something that works for their specific communities. Although the Inwood/PS 98 model has been successful for us, it may not work in every context. For example, at some schools, parents cannot stay for thirty-five minutes after drop off. Other branches determine that it is too limiting to hold the workshops for just pre-K parents and caregivers. In these cases, individual branches have been able to develop early literacy programs that are suited to the families in their communities.

NYPL's Harlem Library, for example, adapted the pre-K workshop content into a "passport-style" workshop, where children and their parents and caregivers visit different tables throughout the branch. Each table addresses a skill a child needs to enter kindergarten prepared. The parents and caregivers and child complete the activity together, get a stamp in their passport, and move to the next station.

NYPL's Morrisania branch took the pre-K workshop content on the road to local homeless shelters. Many other branches host "after-hours" family literacy workshops, and offer dinner and childcare for the families attending the workshop—one librarian will offer a storytime to the children, while the other delivers the workshop to the parents and caregivers. At the end, the parents and caregivers and children come back together to practice literacy-building activities.

No matter how Family Literacy Workshops are hosted, these four core components make them successful:

- Outreach, outreach, outreach. Even if you do not host your workshop with a pre-K classroom, school outreach is always a great way to advertise your programming and build relationships with the teachers.

- Food. If there is food, people will come.

- Childcare. Providing childcare means that parents and caregivers do not have to find a babysitter to attend a library workshop.

- Adaptability. You need to know what your community and pre-K teachers need, not just what you are interested in providing them.

It may take time to find the right fit for your community, but it is worth it. No matter the content covered in the workshop, the community you are helping create for the families and schools is invaluable, whether it's for two families or fifty families. The library acts as a home-school-community connector and is an unwavering center of support for all families. &

Dream It, Write It, Share It

How One Library Engages Students' Summer Learning Program Interest

MELANIE LEWIS

Donna Reynolds and Kaitlyn Mullis help perform a winning writing entry at Clear Creek Elementary School, May 2016.

> *"This has a big impact on our second graders, as it engages their creativity and attention to the writing process in a way that no other assignment does—seeing their work interpreted as a play performed by adults and presented to the entire second grade is a big deal to them!"*
>
> —Maranda Freer, second grade teacher

The Mint Hill Branch Library is one of twenty locations in the Charlotte (NC) Mecklenburg Library (CML) system. While Charlotte is home to over eight hundred thousand people, Mint Hill is a quieter suburb southeast of the Queen City with a population just over twenty-four thousand. There are three elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools in the library's assigned region.

Each year, the children's team of one librarian and three youth specialists at the Mint Hill Library make efforts to visit each school and promote CML's summer learning program. We share the logistics of the program, advertise events, and connect with our community in a professional yet fun manner. Despite all of our efforts, participation waned from one particular school, and we had to act.

I believe in the public library's summer learning program. We are free and accessible and our purpose is transparent and pure. We offer literacy and educational programs to get kids excited about reading and interested in new topics. I took it upon myself to focus our team's strengths on visualizing an approach that would increase the summer learning program's visibility and increase participation from one local elementary school in particular.

Our Strength

What the Youth Services department of the library does best is bring stories to life. If we could bring the children's stories to life, we thought, they might feel more engaged with our public library and compelled to participate in our programs. Thus originated "Dream It, Write It, Share It," a writing contest for second-grade students.

The objective was simple: to foster a partnership with an elementary school that would encourage students to write and participate in the library's summer learning program, and provide a multi-media experience for elementary-aged children in our community. The Dream It, Write It, Share It contest would aim to influence students to write and give them the chance to see their works produced and performed by library staff at their school location.

How It Works

In 2015, I outlined the program in a formal proposal to our local elementary school. The proposal also included statistics

Melanie Lewis *is the children's librarian for the Mint Hill Branch of the Charlotte Mecklenburg (NC) Library. She is an avid puppeteer, encouraging puppet incorporation to storytimes for all youth ages.*

of summer learning program participation from previous years, the benefits of summer learning programs, and the library's willingness to partner in an innovative venture.

Production would occur sometime in late May or early June (whenever was convenient for the school). The library expected the performance to last approximately thirty to sixty minutes. Five winners would be selected. Winners' families would be contacted to attend the presentation, but students would learn of their selection on that day.

The guidelines included:

- Instructions for students
  - Write an original story, no more than three pages long. It may be typed or handwritten. There may be multiple authors, but no more than three.
  - Include illustrations if appropriate.
  - Use descriptive language and explain characters completely.
  - Submit the manuscript in final draft form (clean copies with no scratch-outs, misspellings, or other grammatical corrections). Manuscripts submitted after the teacher's deadline can be submitted at the Mint Hill Library.
- Writing will be judged on creativity and ease of translation to a theatrical production.
- The library may use live actors, puppets, traditional storytelling, or any other medium to portray your writing piece.

Growing a Partnership

I scheduled a meeting with the grade school principal, who quickly got on board. The principal relayed the prospective partnership to grade-level teachers, and they, too, were quick to agree. We scheduled dates and times to present the program to the students. Over two days, we visited each classroom to explain and promote participation in the contest.

From there, the classroom teachers engaged students and encouraged them to submit their work. We received more than sixty entries, and five winners and three honorable mentions were selected.

Prior to the performance, the Youth Services team met twice to prepare props and rehearse. We mostly used items from our existing programming resources (puppets and props), and we prepared other simple effects from art supplies (a jail cell from a cardboard box). There were a few items that needed to be purchased, with a total cost of five dollars.

Showtime and Beyond

On June 2, 2015, the children's staff at the Mint Hill Library performed the winning pieces to the entire second grade and their family members. Titles from The Bad Sleepover and The Lonely Brunitus brought literary magic to approximately two hundred students, staff, and parents. The audience laughed and interacted with certain stories, like in The Evil Dr. Pickle, where the audience was sprayed with water as actors portrayed "the mermaid and the dolphin wash[ing the pickle] off with a hose."

During the summer, several students and staff visited the Mint Hill Library and complimented the performance and the library's efforts to partner. One winner came to the library with her family. The mother thanked me for an entertaining performance and asked me to check her library card. She had some fines recorded on her account, which dated back nine years.

She looked up for a moment then said, "Yep, that's about right. The last time I was in the library was nine years ago." I jokingly asked if the reason she returned was the library's recent performance at her child's school and she said, "Actually, it is!"

Ultimately, the elementary school showed significant improvement in its students' participation in our summer learning program. We saw a 46 percent increase in registrations and a 93 percent increase in completions in our summer learning program over the previous year.

Accomplishment and Progress

This success did not go unnoticed. I have presented Dream It, Write It, Share It at a CML Youth Services quarterly meeting as well as at a North Carolina State Library Summer Reading Conference. The Mint Hill Library has enlisted an additional local school to partner with and use this program to promote the summer learning program in 2016.

Also in 2016, a modified version was brought to a high-need school that historically had zero participation in our summer learning programs. The teachers from the original school appreciated the unique opportunity to partner and requested that we continue the following year. In 2016, we received more than seventy entries in the story contest. Statistics from the summer learning program show that participation and completion rates have held fast.

The enthusiasm of the school staff, the structure of the contest, and the magic of live performance combined to make this a successful partnership. Library visits and summer reading program participation increased and we built a strong foundation for future collaborations with our local schools. The CML Youth Services staff is glad that we dreamed up this contest, wrote a proposal, and shared it with our community. &

I Am Not Beyoncé

Tackling the Issue of Race Representation Head On

ZETTA ELLIOTT

"Who We Are," a mural designed by youth and adult artists in Juxtaposition Arts' Public Art Studio. Located at 1100 West Broadway Ave. in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

You don't have to be perfect or already successful.

You don't have to be Beyoncé!

On my last night of a six-day sojourn in the Twin Cities, I gave a reading at The Loft Literary Center and shared this statement made by a young Black woman, Ysa, whom I had met at Juxtaposition Arts earlier in the day.

Ysa and two of her fellow artist-apprentices shared with me the creative process behind the impressive mural they recently painted on their block. My morning presentation at the arts center was sponsored by Umbra Search, a free digital platform that provided research assistance when the young women needed to study graphics from the Black Panther Party's newspapers. The mural features a mother and child in the traditional sacred pose, but the child in this scene is female and these haloed figures have brown skin and Afros. Beams of light radiate outward, made up of hundreds of small black-and-white photographs of Black women who have made a contribution to the community as well as those who have lost a loved one to violence.

Ysa and her peers stressed that they wanted their mural to show that *everyone* has the potential for greatness, but we're all at different stages in our journey so we shouldn't hold ourselves to the impossibly high standards of our icons. Their goal was to promote healing while increasing the visibility of Black women and girls who are so often overlooked even as they protest against violence in their communities and mourn for those taken too soon.

After a full week of public talks, workshops, and school visits, I was running on fumes that evening. Fortunately, this last event only required me to give a twenty-minute reading before joining five other artists and activists for a panel on elevating absent narratives.

I wanted to share my latest picturebook, *Milo's Museum*, but all I had were pencil sketches from my illustrator in Hong Kong and a story still in need of revision. With Ysa's wise words fresh in my mind, however, I decided to share the incomplete, imperfect book anyway. The audience responded warmly to the tale of a Black girl who sets up her own backyard exhibit after seeing no one from her community represented in the museum visited by her class.

My decision to share that draft may not seem particularly daring but as an indie author, I'm very aware of the stigma associated with self-publishing; I know that my books will be closely scrutinized for flaws—if they're read at all. I am an award-winning author and an award-winning scholar with a PhD in American Studies; I've taught at the college level for close to a decade and I've worked with urban kids for close to thirty years.

But like many writers of color in the United States, I struggle to get published and regularly fight against invisibility within the children's literature community. As a Black feminist, I'm

Zetta Elliott *is a Brooklyn-based educator and author of over twenty books for young readers, including the award-winning picturebook* Bird.

able to theorize my experience of exclusion, and I've written extensively about the many barriers placed in my path to publication. But even as a middle-aged woman, I still recall painful moments from my childhood when it became apparent that the world didn't value little Black girls like me. I know just how Milo feels when she peers into a mirror at the museum and sees nothing that reflects her culture or history.

Perhaps that's why I was so moved by the young people I encountered during my week in the Twin Cities. In addition to the artist-apprentices I met at Juxtaposition Arts, I visited five public schools and spoke to students from the second grade up to the twelfth. Three young Black men from the High School for Recording Arts attended my public workshop on community-based publishing sponsored by Ancestry Books and the Center for Earth, Energy, and Democracy. I developed this particular talk in order to demystify the publishing process and encourage "everyday people" to (re)consider their potential to *produce* and not only consume books.

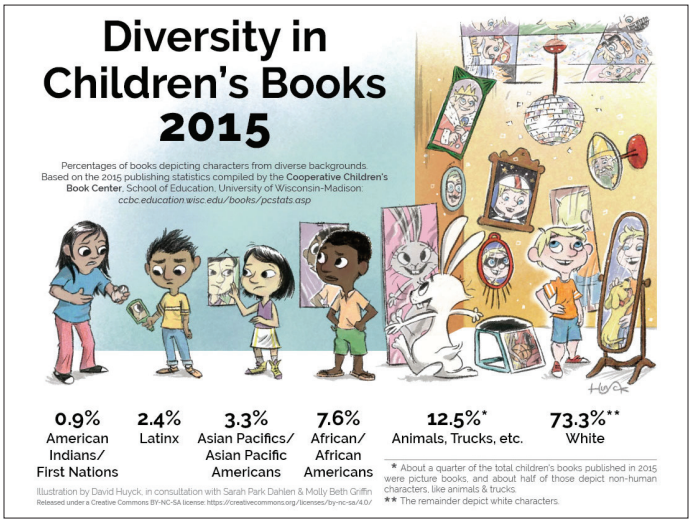
Those three teens were the youngest participants; all were poets and they had plenty to say about the voices in their communities that are silenced or simply go unheard. Terrence told the group that he wrote poetry to show that he didn't mind being vulnerable in front of others. Impressed and somewhat amazed, I asked him to consider writing a letter or poem to a young brother explaining the value of vulnerability in a society that urges/forces black boys to be "hard" rather than reveal the sensitivity and fragility that makes us human.

Whether or not Terrence takes up my suggestion, I was heartened by all three teens' determination to make their voices heard. This particular workshop has become increasingly popular and I will be offering a slightly different version, "Students and Self-Publishing," at the Brooklyn Public Library. I believe that when someone who has been marginalized decides to self-publish, they're ultimately saying to themselves and to society, "I matter. My story matters."

Community-based publishing allows those excluded by the traditional publishing industry to use print-on-demand sites like Lulu, Lightning Source, or CreateSpace to produce culturally specific media in a timely and inexpensive way. The fourth-grade students I met at Vadnais Heights Elementary School were shocked when I told them that many editors rejected my stories because they believed there was "no market."

"That means they don't think enough kids want to read books like mine," I explained, to which the children—most of whom were White—responded: "I want to!" As an indie author I'm able to put people (specifically children) ahead of profit by prioritizing the needs of those within my community rather than relying upon the judgment of cultural and community outsiders.

I'm grateful for every invitation I receive as an indie author because I recognize the risk a professor, librarian, or educator takes when he or she opens the door to someone deemed by



many to be "not quite legitimate," "unaffiliated," and/or "too provocative." The invitations I do receive invariably come from people who share both my commitment to social justice and my love for children from underserved communities who are also underrepresented in children's literature.

Professor Sarah Park Dahlen is one such individual, and she hosted my first event in Minnesota; together we formed a panel at St. Catherine University co-sponsored by the Master of Library and Information Science Program, the ALA Student Chapter, Progressive Librarians Guild, and Student Governance Organization. After reviewing the data she compiled for Lee and Low's 2015 Diversity Baseline Survey (DBS), Sarah unveiled the new graphic she commissioned to illustrate the statistics compiled annually by the Cooperative Children's Book Center.[1]

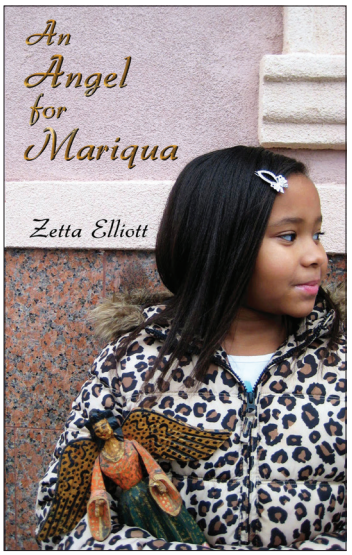
The DBS proves what many of us have always known: that the US publishing industry is dominated by straight, White, cisgender women who are not disabled. The graphic designed by Sarah and her kid-lit colleagues reveals that animals and inanimate objects are better represented in children's literature than Native American children and kids of color. That kind of data made it easy for me to begin my talk by asserting, "We need to talk about white supremacy in the kid lit community."

Children may not be ready to join that conversation, but they nonetheless demonstrate a keen sense of what is and is not fair. I used the graphic in the slideshows that accompany my book talks, and it was interesting to see how students in the Twin Cities eagerly engaged with the data and the clever way it's presented. They immediately noticed that the White child is surrounded by mirrors, all of which reflect him in different heroic roles: king, superhero, firefighter, astronaut.

By contrast, the Native child and kids of color have only one mirror each; their mirrors diminish in size and only reflect the child's image, indicating that the few books about them don't represent them in anything other than realistic narratives. I'm able to address this representation gap by self-publishing books that show kids of color traveling through time, meeting ghosts,

and discovering magical creatures in their own urban neighborhoods.

On the third day of my tour, I went to Lucy Laney Elementary School with Chaun Webster, owner of Ancestry Books. Two of Chaun's children attend the majority-Black school, and his son was in the first of two second-grade classes that I visited. Literacy specialist Faye Wooten insisted that I make a grand entrance, and the children were clearly excited to be meeting an author for the first time. I told them that I started writing for children after meeting a girl who was bullied at school because her mother was in prison; the slide showed the cover of my novel alongside a bullet point stating that 2.7 million children in the United States have one incarcerated parent.[2] When I revealed that my older brother had spent time in jail, almost two-thirds of the students raised their hand to tell me about a family member who was also (or had once been) incarcerated. A recent blog post by Mitali Perkins reveals just a handful of books for young readers that address mass incarceration in this country—a crisis that disproportionately impacts children of color.[3] We don't have enough mirror books to adequately reflect the varied realities of our children, and yet one prominent editor rejected *An Angel for Mariqua* on the grounds that she felt children couldn't identify with the lonely, angry protagonist. Clearly the children she had in mind were not the children at Lucy Laney Elementary School.



As Sarah crisscrossed the Twin Cities that week, shuttling me to and from schools, public events, and my hotel, Beyoncé's *Lemonade* album played softly on the stereo. I'm not as ardent a fan as Sarah (who ventured out on a stormy spring night when the Formation World Tour arrived in Minneapolis), but my respect for Beyoncé certainly increased with the April 2016 release of her visual album and its unflinching images of Black women's suffering, resistance, and healing.

Embracing the feminist adage, "the personal is political," Beyoncé sings of betrayal within her marriage against a backdrop of images representing the nation's betrayal of African Americans: the abandonment of New Orleans's Black residents following Hurricane Katrina, and the killing of unarmed Blacks at the hands of the police. When I was asked by a homeschooling mother to develop a *Lemonade* syllabus for children (an adult syllabus had just been published by Candice Benbow), I turned to Sarah and academic librarian/blogger Edith Campbell for assistance. We published three age-specific lists on my blog in May, and our selections reflect some of *Lemonade*'s themes: self-love, African roots, spirituality, New Orleans, the history and culture(s) of the South, Black women's activism, police brutality, and "Daddy Lessons."[4] That post has been viewed more than 4,500 times and continues to circulate on social media, even inspiring a pop-up library #Lemonade stand at the Newark Public Library last summer.

When my week in Minnesota ended and I returned to Brooklyn, I sat down to write and put "Formation" on steady rotation. I am not Beyoncé; I will never have her fame, wealth, or influence, and I am definitely not "flawless." But as Ysa explained, one doesn't have to be perfect to make a difference. I'm still learning how to publish quality books independently and through an industry that I experience as hostile or indifferent. But when I walk into a classroom or library or auditorium, I know that I embody possibility and I hope my twenty-five books inspire other writers of color to persist despite all the obstacles placed in our way.

We don't have to wait for the publishing industry to change its ways and become more inclusive. As Black feminist poet/activist June Jordan reminded us, "We are the ones we have been waiting for."[5]

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And the Newbery Goes To . . .

A Picturebook?

MARY SCHREIBER

In 2016, the top prize for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children went to a picturebook: *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña. Previously, only one other picturebook had won the Newbery Medal.

As a member of the 2016 Newbery Award Committee, I had a voice in selecting a picturebook for the coveted Newbery Medal. But after the announcement, I started to wonder just how many picturebooks had received either the medal or the honor title in the past.

At the airport in Boston, I ran into Dr. Marianne Martens, a professor at my alma mater, Kent State University's School of Library and Information Science. She told me about a conference the School of Library and Information Science was starting, the Marantz Picturebook Research Symposium.[1] Dr. Martens encouraged me to submit a proposal for a poster presentation on the topic of "Newbery as Picture Book." This article springs from that research.

My first thought was to look for a list of Newbery picturebook winners, but I had no luck unearthing such a list that was up to date. The most recent list I found was included in a 1999 article written by Martha Parravano.[2] Thus, I began research to add on the titles from 2000 to 2016.

From the ALSC website, I printed off a list of all Newbery Medal and Honor Books.[3] As of January 2016, this list included 403 known titles (94 winners, 309 honors) but will continue to grow each year as more awards are handed out. Indeed, it has already expanded since my initial evaluation. With the announcement of the 2017 winner and honor books the grand total is now 407 known titles (95 winners, 312 honors).[4]

My method of whittling the list down involved checking each title in one of three online library catalogs: Cuyahoga County Public Library, SearchOhio, and OhioLink. From there, I looked at the number of pages recorded, and I ordered in anything under eighty pages. I narrowed the list down to nine titles—two winners and seven honors (eight after the announcement in January 2017)—that I believe are the most picturebook–like Newbery recipients. They include:

Newbery Winners

2016—*Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Christian Robinson (Putnam/Penguin)

1982—*A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers* by Nancy Willard, illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen (Harcourt)

Mary Schreiber is the Youth Collection Development Specialist for Cuyahoga County (OH) Public Library. Mary is a member of the ALSC Public Awareness Committee and co-convenes the ALSC Collection Management Discussion Group. The views expressed in this article are her own and do not necessarily represent the views of the library.

Newbery Honors

2017—*Freedom over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams Brought to Life* by Ashley Bryan (Atheneum Books for Young Readers)

2011—*Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night* by Joyce Sidman, illustrated by Rick Allen (Houghton Mifflin)

2006—*Show Way* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Hudson Talbott, illustrated by Rick Allen (Putnam)

1985—*Like Jake and Me* by Mavis Jukes, illustrated by Lloyd Bloom (Knopf)

1983—*Doctor De Soto* by William Steig (Farrar)

1972—*Annie and the Old One* by Miska Miles, illustrated by Peter Parnall (Little, Brown)

1934—*The ABC Bunny* by Wanda Gág (Coward)

1929—*Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gág (Coward)

But how is a picturebook Newbery even possible? That's where the Newbery Award manual comes in. When speaking to groups of adults and kids during my reading year, I always stressed the broad range of reading with which I was tasked. I was reading and evaluating picturebooks, fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels, and first readers, and the books were for young children, beginning readers, chapter book readers, middle grade readers, and yes, even teen readers. The expectation to read widely is depicted in the Newbery Manual, which states:

> **Definition #2** A "contribution to American literature for children" shall be a book for which children are an intended potential audience. The book displays respect for children's understandings, abilities, and appreciations. Children are defined as persons of ages up to and including fourteen, and books for this entire age range are to be considered.

And

> **Criteria #2** Each book is to be considered as a contribution to American literature. The committee is to make its decision primarily on the text. Other components of a book, such as illustrations, overall design of the book, etc., may be considered when they make the book less effective.[5]

As the saying goes, what happens during Newbery committee discussions, stays with that Newbery committee. However, speaking in broader terms, it has been whispered over the years that someone might have typed up the words from an illustrated work (specific titles not mentioned) so they could judge it by the merits of its text alone. This is one way to interpret the above language.

Another way of looking at this conundrum was presented to the 2016 committee at our meeting during the ALA 2015 Midwinter Meeting. Newbery chair Ernie Cox invited past Newbery member and chair Nina Lindsay to share insights into the process. Her perspective was captured in the minutes, as this is one of the few moments that is not considered confidential in a Newbery committee's time together. Lindsay imparted words of wisdom, which she later clarified for the context of this article.

She said, "The Newbery criteria ask us to focus on the text and only pay attention to other elements if they detract, but nowhere do they tell us the text has to stand alone, or be considered separate from the graphics. If part of the text's job is to stand back and let the pictures tell the story—that's doing its job."[6]

So how does one go about evaluating a picturebook without discussing the illustrations? Lucky for reviewers and award committee members alike, K. T. Horning has written *From Cover to Cover*, which she last updated in 2010. Chapter 5 tackles picturebooks and breaks it into two sections: text and pictures. Horning provides a great checklist of questions to ask when looking at picturebook text.

She writes, "Do the pages seem to turn in the right places? Does the text flow naturally when you read it aloud? Are there sentence or plot structures that make the story predictable?"[7] Even if a picturebook can check all these boxes, it still must also fit the criteria for the Newbery, including excellence in aspects like plot, characters, setting, style, etc.

The Newbery Manual's Criteria, Terms, and Definitions can be interpreted to include picturebooks, but as of 2016, only about 2 percent of Newbery winners and honor books have been picturebooks. The next logical question is—why doesn't it happen more often?

I think the answer lies in the fact that the committee changes every year, and so do the books under consideration. Truly, it is up to each Newbery committee to interpret the guidelines as they see fit. After rigorous discussion, the books they feel are the most distinguished rise to the top of the ballot.

It is amazing that ninety-five years later, guidelines that were first used in 1922 can still be interpreted so that books like *Last Stop on Market Street* and *Freedom Over Me* can be recognized for their distinguished use of language. Picturebooks can be Newbery Medal winners!

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BookBins

The "Waiting Room in a Box" of Outreach

HEIDI KNUTH

In fall 2015, the Bloomingdale (IL) Public Library was increasing community outreach at an incredible rate, Little Free Libraries were all the buzz, both in library circles and among community activists and beautifiers, and I happened to be in a cell phone store . . . watching a small child do everything in her three year old power to alleviate her boredom.

She was running circles around the desk, pulling packaged accessories off displays, and patting at mom's leg for attention . . . all to no avail. I eventually left the store without having my needs met—much like that little girl—and as I drove back to the library, a solution presented itself.

What if we took some withdrawn materials, packaged them up, and used them to serve our patrons where there was a demonstrated need? A small mobile library would be like a waiting room in a box and be free marketing for the library! Every year, there are library materials that can be repurposed. It would be community outreach, passive programming, recycling, serving the patrons—so many birds with this one stone!

I scoured the Internet for sturdy, practical containers of an unobtrusive size that would still hold a nice selection of (mainly) picturebooks, maybe a puppet or puzzle or two. Then I drafted a proposal for my department head to pass along to the library director and library board.

Our board loves community outreach and partnerships, so they were eager to begin, as were all involved.

I purchased the bins, created sturdy labels, collected materials, and began entering everything into spreadsheets. The materials that were in each bin, which locations to solicit as hosts, and rotation schedules were all created and color coded. I mapped out a few routes to maximize how many locations I could visit at a time and incorporated them into my commutes back to the library after outreach storytimes.

I selected VESSLA storage crates ($6 each) from IKEA, since they were sturdy, had convenient casters, and an upper curved lip that made transport easy. All of the materials in each bin were curated from our biannual weeding, and a concurrent picturebook reorganization project meant I had lots of quality materials. The puzzles and puppets were chosen from retired materials as well. The laminated labels were designed and installed in-house, using materials we had on hand. We began with ten crates, and our initial cost of $60 came from the Youth Services programming budget.

I began canvassing local businesses and locations like the post office. The standard approach was a friendly explanation that the program was absolutely free of cost and risk; it was simply the library's way of filling a need and being a good community partner. Some locations were shown a prepared bin, others weren't, depending on the atmosphere.

Heidi Knuth *is Youth Services Librarian and Preschool Outreach Coordinator/Volun-Teen Coordinator at Bloomingdale (IL) Public Library.*

Locations were selected based on anticipated need, space allocations, village boundaries, and absence of competition. In the interest of being good neighbors, I did not offer bins to retail locations that sold children's items.

Initial pitches were received with expected levels of enthusiasm, and of the businesses that refused, more than half were due to strict corporate control over franchise environments. Every location indicated support for the program and wished the library success.

As of July 2016, twenty-seven locations had been visited, with eight choosing to participate. All have been given a rotation (or two) of materials, and they indicated that they both used and liked having the bins.

None of the items in the bins has been damaged or gone missing; in fact, at our very first location—the cell phone store that inspired the program—our bin had somehow acquired an extra book! A juvenile novel from a local middle school library was with the rest of the materials, so I dropped it off at the school with a note explaining the program and how the book was found. There have been other proofs of usage as well . . . a magazine here, a stray washable marker there . . . little clues that our patrons are being served, even when we aren't there in person.

There are only two bins left in our original purchase, so the plan is to find homes for them, then purchase more crates and begin making rounds again. I've also added juvenile magazines and small games as they are removed from the circulating collection.

During the first materials rotation, the local postmistress said, "That's been such a good idea! The kids love it!," while one of local bank branch managers added, "Yeah, the kids love it. And it keeps them busy, so it's great for us."

Spheres of Transformation

Jenna Nemec-Loise

Jenna Nemec-Loise *is Member Content Editor, ALSC Everyday Advocacy website and electronic newsletter.*

Everyday Advocacy empowers ALSC members to embrace their roles as library advocates by focusing on their daily efforts to serve kids and families. Each lighthearted column features easy-to-implement strategies and techniques for asserting the transformative power of libraries both within communities and beyond them. Please contact Jenna Nemec-Loise at jnemecloise@outlook.com with comments and ideas for future topics.

Eeeeee! Who's excited about the 2017–20 ALSC strategic plan? *(Insert cartwheel here.)* If you're even a fraction of the organizational governance nerd I am, I'll bet you're 100 percent jazzed, too.

Haven't checked out the plan yet? Stop whatever you're doing right now and have a look. (Find the plan at www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/stratplan.) I promise it won't take long to get a strong sense of where ALSC hopes to be just three short years from now.

There's a lot to love here, right?

First off, the plan's visual appeal is awesome. The infographic shows, rather than tells, members, stakeholders, and outsiders what ALSC is all about. At a glance you can tell what's important for the next three years and how it relates to the larger ALSC picture.

Next is the plan's member-focused and member-driven content. During every stage of the strategic planning process, the ALSC board of directors didn't stop at listening to respond to members. Our leaders went the distance and listened to understand them, which resulted in clear, no-nonsense approaches to the plan's three areas of strategic action: Diversity and Inclusion, Advocacy *(yay!)*, and Learning and Development.

Spheres of Transformation

Perhaps the depth, breadth, and reach of the new strategic plan is best captured through the plan's three concentric spheres of transformation, each of which reflects ALSC's core values and the division's fierce commitment to empowering membership:

- **Transforming ALSC.** Members have clear, welcoming pathways to contribute to the work of the association;
- **Transforming Children's Librarianship.** ALSC empowers the profession to be nimble and embrace change as children's needs evolve; and

- **Transforming Communities through Libraries.** ALSC and libraries are essential partners in a comprehensive system of care for children.

As we dig deeper into the strategic plan's Advocacy objectives—this is the Everyday Advocacy column, after all—consider your role in each sphere of transformation. Think beyond the three organizational spheres and ask yourself, "What are my own spheres of transformation?" Keep these questions in mind:

- **Transforming My Library.** How do I contribute to the work of my library beyond essential job responsibilities?

- **Transforming My Role as Everyday Advocate.** How do I embrace change and honor the evolving needs of my library's children and families through my work?

- **Transforming My Library Community.** How do I amplify my library's role as a community partner and ally in improving outcomes for the children and families?

Recognizing your role as a prime mover and change agent within the larger ALSC strategic plan is Everyday Advocacy in action!

Advocacy as Area of Strategic Action

For the 2017–2020 strategic plan period, ALSC is placing greater emphasis on helping members champion and articulate the purpose and value of strong and meaningful library service to children. Here are the four objectives outlined under the Advocacy area of strategic action and related questions for your consideration as an Everyday Advocate:

1. Establish an accessible content stream of valuation tools and research updates, including customizable content for members, by September 2018. (*Transforming ALSC*)

   Questions for Everyday Advocates: What valuation tools would be most useful in my library community? Where do I see a need for greater valuation efforts? Which programs or services I currently provide would benefit from greater advocacy and valuation efforts?

2. Articulate a prioritized research agenda, including, but not limited to, summer learning/out-of-school time, by September 2018, and pursue avenues for conducting and/or supporting the research by September 2020. (*Transforming Children's Librarianship*)

   Questions for Everyday Advocates: What research topics would I most like to see ALSC pursue? What areas of my work as an Everyday Advocate would be bolstered with research and data? What expertise and evidence-based practice can I share with ALSC as the research agenda is being formulated?

3. Amplify librarians' essential role as information literacy experts through advocacy outputs, including communications, webinars, and establishing collaborations, by September 2018. (*Transforming Communities through Libraries*)

   Questions for Everyday Advocates: How am I currently asserting my role as an information literacy expert? What skills can I cultivate to do so more effectively? What types of professional development opportunities would help me achieve greater competency in this area?

4. Increase targeted messaging to the wider library profession and the public about the expertise of ALSC and our members to demonstrate the purpose and value of strong and meaningful children's librarianship by September 2019. (*Transforming Communities through Libraries*)

   Questions for Everyday Advocates: What audiences have I already reached successfully with such messaging? Which groups can I target at local and state levels? Who in my circle of advocates can help me identify multiple communication channels and disseminate messaging?

Getting Involved

As ALSC leadership activates members to enact the 2017–2020 strategic plan, we're counting on Everyday Advocates like you to lead the way! Let ALSC President Nina Lindsay or any member of the ALSC board of directors know how you'd like to contribute. Keep us posted on what's happening in your library community and how the strategic plan's spheres of transformation and areas of strategic action are impacting your work.

Really want to dig in? Submit the all-new electronic version of the ALSC Committee Volunteer Form (find it at www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/coms/alscforms) and indicate your interest in Priority Group I: Child Advocacy. The work of our dynamic committees will be guided and shaped by the objectives outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion, Advocacy, and Learning and Development areas of strategic action. Committees can't do this awesome work without you!

Finally, tools and resources on the Everyday Advocacy website (www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy) will evolve to reflect the new strategic plan as the work of ALSC moves forward. Keep checking back to find all the support you need to succeed in your own spheres of transformation, which are powerful indeed.

Using Social Media to Impart Early Literacy Tips to Parents

Jill Bickford

Jill Bickford *is Coordinator of Youth Services at West Bloomfield Township (MI) Public Library.*

Libraries are constantly working to help parents prepare their children to be readers, and we're aided, in part, by the Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) parent education initiative.

We are always looking for new ways to reach parents of young children and convey this accessible, practical, and applicable information. We impart tips during parent workshops and storytimes, and one-on-one during patron interactions, but how do we continue to reach them once they've left the building? How do we reach those caregivers who cannot regularly come to our libraries for a variety of reasons?

Social media provides us with a simple and affordable way to do just that. Tools such as Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and Instagram can enable us to reach parents and provide them with an abundant, yet not overwhelming, amount of helpful and inspiring information.

A July 2015 Pew Research Center report titled *Parents and Social Media* found that among parents who use the Internet, 83 percent use social media.[1] Among those, 83 percent of mothers and 74 percent of fathers said they receive useful information through social media, and 59 percent said they found parenting information.[2] Younger parents were more likely to use Instagram; in fact, that platform was used by 35 percent of parents with children under the age of five.[3] According to a report by Crowdtap, a whopping 90 percent of millennial parents find social media helpful.[4]

In determining which platforms to use at your library, consider surveying your users, like we did at the West Bloomfield Township (MI) Public Library in 2015. When patrons were asked what types of information they wanted to receive from the library via social media, 17 percent wanted parenting tips and 24 percent wanted early literacy activities. Prior to the survey, we mainly focused our social media posts on program promotion. After conducting our survey, however, we realized that our audience was more interested in learning tips for at home engagement with their children.

Social media allows us to communicate with parents on a regular basis with short, simple messages, mainly with pictures, keeping text to a minimum, especially on platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram. A photo or video can grab the attention of busy parents. A simple video clip of a nursery rhyme being sung or picture of Humpty Dumpty can prompt a parent to sing to a child. A picture of a child finger-painting can remind a parent of a simple activity to build fine motor skills. Additionally, social media enables libraries to reach parents beyond those who specifically follow them. When a parent shares a post, retweets, or repins, the message reaches even more parents.

At West Bloomfield, we have a separate Pinterest board as part of our Grow Up Reading initiative to offer parents, caregivers, and early childhood educators simple early literacy activities. The Pinterest board, along with our other social media accounts, is promoted on our website and print

materials but also through word of mouth and at programs and storytimes.

Many youth services departments feel they do not have the staff resources to maintain a vibrant social media presence. Remember that your content does not need to be an original creation. Just as we do not write the books in our collections, you do not need to write original posts. There are many organizations already doing this, such as Too Small to Fail, Zero to Three, and Child Trends. Monitor information from a variety of organizations and harvest and use it as appropriate for your audience.

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Math Counts Too!

Promoting Family Engagement in Math Activities at Home

Erica L. Zippert, Betsy Diamant-Cohen, and Annette Y. Goldsmith

Although librarians typically focus on language and literacy when planning children's programs, research suggests that math skills are valuable too. Today, proficiency in math is an essential professional skill. Many careers involve math, and math classes act as gateways to attaining degrees in STEM fields.[1] In our personal lives, math is used daily to manage household finances and make informed decisions about our health.[2] Finally, math skills at school entry are strong predictors of later academic achievement in both math *and* reading.[3] Therefore, math development should be considered an important part of children's school readiness skills.

Evidence suggests that parents and other adults can make a positive impact on children's math learning by guiding them to talk about and explore early math concepts.[4] However, parents from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds report supporting their children's language and literacy skills more often than math skills at home,[5] and low-income children receive even less math-specific input from parents than their more affluent peers.[6] Thus, it is important for children's librarians to encourage all parents to support their children's math skills at home.

Why Are Early Math Experiences Important?

Research shows that early math experiences are essential for developing number knowledge, which serves as the cornerstone for mathematical thinking. An observational study assessed how parents with infants talked about numbers by recording interactions at home over several time points.[7] The researchers found that talk about numbers varied substantially from parent to parent, but this talk predicted children's numerical knowledge as preschoolers. Additionally, more parent talk about numbers describing visible sets of objects was most predictive of children's later number knowledge.[8] This is because children need help understanding that number words do not just appear in the counting string, but also represent specific numbers of countable objects. Ultimately, this talk helped children to understand that number words are not just words, but represent actual objects that can be counted.

Other researchers compared different ways of supporting preschool children's number knowledge.[9] They confirmed that counting *and* labeling visible sets of objects was more successful in improving preschool children's number knowledge than only labeling quantities or only counting them. Thus, discussing numbers by counting *and* labeling objects (e.g., toys in the play area and chairs at the dinner table) seems crucial in supporting young children's developing numerical knowledge, particularly to help them understand what numbers mean.

What Could These Experiences Look Like?

Other research shows that math experiences can take place at home in the beginning of or prior to formal schooling, and can be led by parents.



Erica Zippert *is a postdoctoral scholar at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Her research involves studying preschool children's mathematical thinking and how it can be supported in the context of informal learning activities with parents and peers.* ***Betsy Diamant-Cohen*** *is an early literacy trainer and Executive Director of Mother Goose on the Loose, Baltimore, Maryland.* ***Annette Y. Goldsmith*** *is a lecturer at the University of Washington Information School who teaches online from her home in Los Angeles, California.*

Sheri-Lynn Skwarchuk and her colleagues surveyed parents about the frequency of parent-child math activities at home, classifying the experiences as either formal (e.g., doing arithmetic or counting out loud) or informal (e.g., playing card or board games).[10] Unlike formal math experiences, informal experiences are not meant to explicitly teach math, but do so incidentally through everyday activities, such as play and household tasks. The more frequently parents reported engaging their children in both types of experiences, the better their children's mathematical knowledge fared in first grade.

Observational studies have shown how informal math-related experiences encourage families to explore specific early math concepts during everyday activities. Researchers observed parents and their four-year-olds at home making crispy rice treats by following a recipe.[11] During the activity, parents and children identified numbers (e.g., number of cups of cereal needed) and counted out loud (e.g., to keep track of the number of cups of cereal added). In fewer instances, they compared quantities and did arithmetic. Opportunities to talk about number concepts also exist during parent-preschooler play with board games such as *The Ladybug Game*,[12] number puzzles,[13] and book reading accompanied by free play with toys related to the story (e.g., cash register, toy food, and play money).[14] Thus, many playful and regularly occurring informal activities serve as contexts for families to talk about math.

A more recent study demonstrated that math can be explored on tablet computers at home.[15] Storybook reading at bedtime was swapped with a math activity by inviting families of first graders to solve math problems on an app called Bedtime Math (http://bedtimemath.org).[16] The app gave families a problem to work on, and children who used the app with their parents earned better math grades in school than those who did not use the app. Many apps are labeled "educational" but do not have the research to support this claim. Librarians can promote research-supported apps such as this one as useful tools for at-home math learning.

Why Might Parent-Child Math Experiences Differ?

To discover why parents' math interactions with their children vary, researchers interviewed mothers of preschoolers, asking for their thoughts about math.[17] The majority were not confident about their math skills, were more interested in supporting early literacy, thought that math skills were less important than literacy development, and were unsure what math skills their children should be learning. In another study, parents of preschoolers were asked to estimate their children's numerical knowledge, and found that parents were uncertain about their children's abilities to compare two numbers (e.g., determine which is bigger) and do arithmetic, but were more certain about their children's abilities to count and name numbers.[18] They less frequently supported the skills about which they were less certain. This implies that parents do not support math skills they know less about, and also that parents may hold less-than-positive attitudes and perceptions about math.

How Can Librarians Help Parents Support Math during Programming?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for Families website (https://families.naeyc.org) offers many helpful tips for parents. Articles include "Five Ways to Build Math into Your Child's Day" (https://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/music-math-more/5-ways-build-math-your-childs-day), "Math Talk with Infants and Toddlers" (https://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/music-math-more/math-talk-infants-and-toddlers), and "Support Math Readiness through Math Talk" (https://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/music-math-more/support-math-readiness-through-math-talk).[19]

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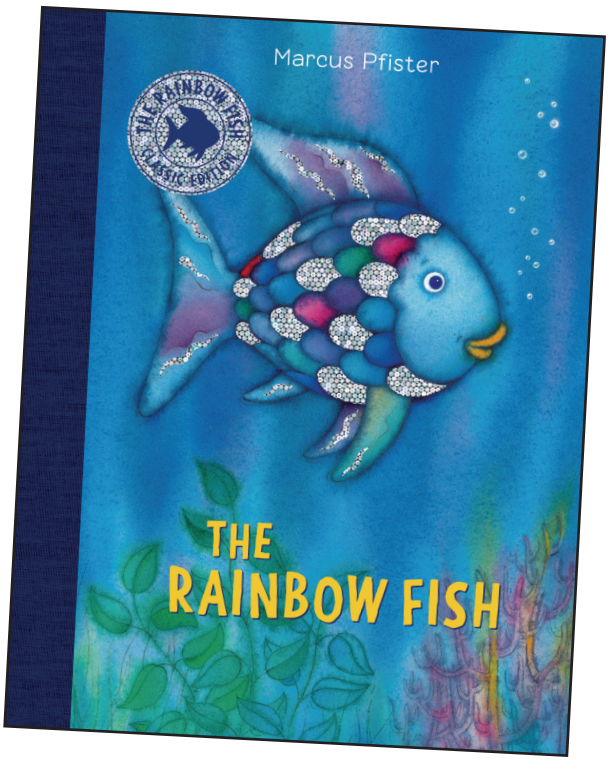

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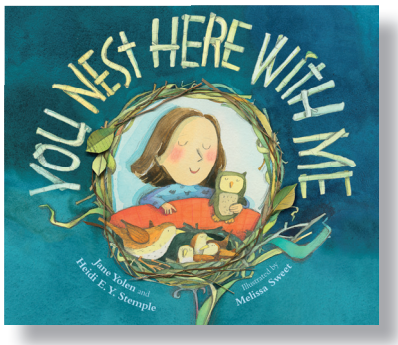

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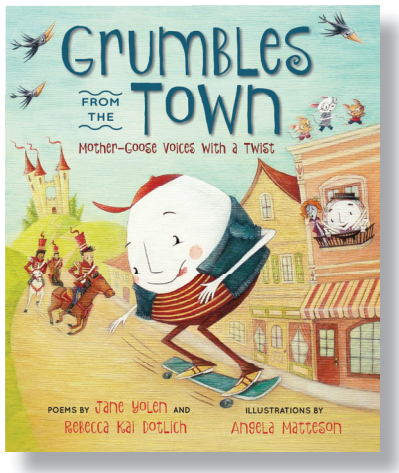

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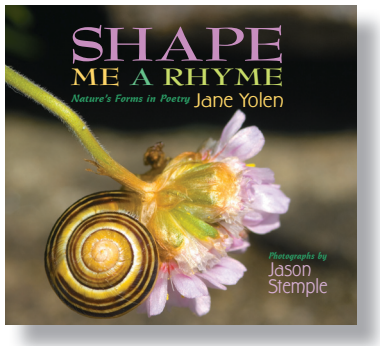

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