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Embracing the Theme

As President-elect, it was my responsibility to choose the theme for the 2009 CSLA Conference. It came into focus as I was reflecting on the many predictions in the media that books are becoming obsolete. While book advocates unfavorably compare knowledge gathered instantly on the Internet with the deeper understandings discovered by reading books, others, including many of our students, believe that the two forms of media are in direct competition and that anything they need can be better found on the Internet.

This led me to reflect on the kind of learning that I observe occurring in the school library. Students excitedly report that, although they have never heard of certain ideas before, once they learn about them, related information seems to materialize out of nowhere. Then, after they read more, they make new connections. As when students engage in free, independent reading, the learning isn't orderly, linear, or methodical; instead it's chaotic, circuitous, and haphazard. It is also exciting, dynamic, and fun—something to encourage.

Learning from All Sources

The truth is, the Internet and books are complimentary; each leads readers to the other in a serendipitous way. The following quote by Diana Ackerman, author of The Zookeeper’s Wife, seems to resolve the argument: “The Internet is a volume in our library,” Ackerman said, “a colorful, miscellaneous, and serendipitous one—but not a replacement for books, and certainly not an alternative to spending time in the world and just paying attention to things.” She used the Internet to find out what animals the Warsaw zoo had during World War II. She added authenticity to her novel by listening to gibbon calls and studying bird migration in 1939. But she conducted real-life research by reading interviews and testimonials by Holocaust survivors, and many, many books, some which had to be translated in order for her to read them.

The Need for School Libraries

The need for school librarians is greater than ever before. And, Teacher Librarians must race to stay current to meet the ever-changing needs of students and the school community. In the age of user-generated content, many barriers to collaboration have disappeared. Social networking, blogging, video sharing, and interactive teaching and learning have totally changed how we receive information. At the same time, sound bites in online and television news programs mask complexities; half-truths inhibit critical thinking and analysis. Teacher Librarians, library aides, library advocates, and library professionals work together to teach students how to access, evaluate, use information. They recognize when students plagiarize and help them to use ethical practices instead of taking desperate measures to make up for the fact that they haven’t studied enough. They work to help students make connections between information sources in all formats. More than ever before, we need school libraries and library staff. We need them to help students to continue to engage in the way we learn in real life—to embrace the serendipity of learning!
Embracing the Serendipity of Learning, the theme for our marvelous Fall 2009 conference, carries over to this spring issue of the Journal. As we who work with students in the library and related settings know, learning often occurs because students are there surrounded by “all those ideas and words shouting,” as poet Myra Cohn Livingston noted in her poem, *Quiet*, in *Malibu and Other Poems*, Atheneum, 1972.

**Ways Learning Happens**

Learning happens when we make the library a welcoming place, as described in Jill Sonnenberg’s article where she details nine guidelines to making the library the hub of the school. It happens with Accelerated Reader (AR), as Dana Stemig observes, when the program is used well to motivate reading and when students participate in America’s Battle of the Books as described by Judy Davidson. It happens when library staff is ready and available, which especially benefits Latino students, as Jeanne Nelson found in her doctoral study. It happens when students engage with social bookmarking under the guidance of a wise teacher like Janice Sterns. It happens when students and teachers connect with authors, part of the mission of a nonprofit headed by Bonnie O’Brian.

Learning happens when authors themselves, such as Gretchen Woelfle, read and then write nonfiction books for young readers, encountering eye-opening surprises along the way, and when researchers such as Susie Goodin look for connections between disciplines. And while it is satisfying to contemplate the ways that we impact student learning, it is even better news when those suspicions are confirmed by Stephen Krashen, Syying Lee, and Jeff McQuillan in their new study analyzing data from PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Study). In their examination of four key predictors of reading development, readers will see that access to books in the school library appears to make up for students’ low socio-economic status, a key variable to student success.

**Learning Sparks Learning**

I know I speak for our generous authors in this issue when I say that we hope you will take away many ideas from these articles that will spark your own serendipitous learning and that you will apply these well to make learning that much more enticing for your students.

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Marilyn N. Robertson, Ed.D., is a past president of CSLA and retired member of the district library team for the Los Angeles Unified School District. She can be reached at mnrobert@earthlink.net.
Reading for Pleasure

Information literacy matters. Research skills matter. Library skills matter. I care deeply about all of these. But after learning from Jim Trelease and studying Dr. Stephen Krashen’s work about access to books (Krashen, 1993), I am convinced that it is reading for pleasure that is a necessary precursor to the development of these more complex skills. We also know that reading for pleasure throughout the year leads to student success on state tests in April. Reading for pleasure across the disciplines also distinguishes a literate, active and engaged school—and citizenry. But what matters to me more than any of these is the creation of meaningful, caring relationships with students through reading and books. Then we can get down to business.

In the past two and half years, we have more than doubled circulation in our library. We do not know which of the following changes in policy or practice has led to this increase in circulation. The fact is, we don’t have much time to wonder—we are too busy working with students and checking out their books.

Guidelines that Work

What follows are ten guidelines that have gradually turned the Nevada Union High School (NU) Library into the real social center of the school. Some of these practices may seem difficult to implement or even heretical. We are aware that not every library practitioner will agree with our suggestions, but still hope that some will consider using one or more of them as they have made all the difference for us in terms of reaching—and surpassing—our circulation goals.

■ Guideline 1. Learn your students’ names rather than forcing them to use their student ID cards every time they check out a book. While this doesn’t change the need for them to have their card on campus at all times, we took a lesson from the TV show “Cheers” and decided to make our students’ names their identifying factor rather than their ID numbers. If we know their last name by heart, we look them up that way and check out the book without ever having to ask for their number. This surprises them and delights them but mostly makes them feel a sense of belonging, which is our ultimate goal. If we need to ask for their number, we ten-key it in and confirm their name as it pops up on the screen. We have had zero problems with confusion, or people using other people’s numbers to check out books. What we’ve gained is an increased familiarity with our kids, and frankly, a nod to common sense.

■ Guideline 2. Let the students speak at a normal volume in the library. You may be surprised to find how often their discussions are actually about schoolwork. We are constantly astounded at the level of noise that students can tolerate and still manage to get work done. Yes, we have a silent study area in the library but, frankly, it is never used. The kids in our library are a relatively noisy bunch but they also have books spread everywhere and pen hits paper constantly. We have had less than a handful of questions or complaints about the noise level in the library over the past few years, but many compliments and words of thanks for the fact that we allow a reasonable level of conversation to take place.
Guideline 3. Take advantage of the fact that young people love to look at pictures of themselves and of their friends. Our students’ online lives are vibrant thanks to the videos and photos that they post and share on social networking sites. We have capitalized on this love for color and media in a couple of different ways.

One of the best ways we have found to attract students to the counter is to post wallet-sized photos of our visitors right on our circulation desk. What started as a lark—a way for making our regulars feel connected—has turned into a library custom. The counter here at NUHS is literally covered with hundreds of photos that we have taken during the current school year. These photos add color but also a whole lot of flavor to our circ desk. I knew that we had stumbled upon something worthwhile when groups of students started to gather around the library counter to scrutinize the wallet-sized photos of their friends, classmates, and teachers. Synchronicity often occurs when these same kids are subsequently drawn to the nearby stacks of recently checked-in books!

We maintain three-ring binders of the past years’ photos, which are fascinating on a number of levels. The staff members like to look at them to see how the students have matured during their time here but they are also pored over by the students: siblings looking for their brothers and sisters who have graduated, seniors looking at themselves as freshmen, or friends looking for friends. There is only one rule about browsing the photos and that is that there is no “dissing” of anyone at any time. We have everyone on the counter, from the football heroes to the Anime Club members, I let the students approve their photos before we post them, and we keep it positive. The overarching message is that we are all equally important in the library.

We use a digital camera that we can afford not to worry about and snap away. Sometimes these sessions turn into real photo shoots, which build positive relationships with students. I never goad the students into having their photos taken, however. Our taking the photos has to be completely at their own discretion. The steps for getting the photos from the camera to the counter are relatively simple. We use the wallet-sized option for printing, which will give you nine photos per page. Cut and arrange the photos on laminating pouches, laminate them, and tape the sheets down on the counter. Learn from our mistake and never, ever use book tape, as it is nearly impossible to remove without solvents. Regular tape works perfectly well.

Guideline 4. Let your photos lead to video and other library “gimmicks.” Using student photos somehow has lead us to creating student videos—in the form of booktalks (http://www.schooltube.com/user/NULibrary). These have been a huge hit. I just finished taping nearly one hundred freshmen in collaboration with an English teacher. Not all of the students want their booktalks posted online and we respect this. We also adapted a permission slip for those who do want their booktalks posted so that parents are kept in the loop. We use first names only online and use SchoolTube instead of YouTube because the commenting feature is very contained. Our interview format, while informal, is still an excellent exercise in building confidence while hitting the listening and speaking standards. Another project has been to engage our students with t-shirt contests where students come up with catchy slogans such as “Get Your Read On” or “Seriously…Read a Book.” We give the winning student(s) credit on the shirts themselves and the winner(s) get a free shirt (last year a duo won, hence the plural). We have also been known to give out stickers, created on full-sheet labels in MS Word and then cut into small 2” squares that say, for example, “I went to the NU Library today.” I personally cannot believe how excited our teenage students are to get their hands on these. Finally, we sometimes place toys on the counter to lure kids to play at the desk and stay awhile. Sometimes this loitering results in an extra book (or five) getting checked out of the library.

Guideline 5. The kids actually need to have books that interest them—and tons of them.

During the past two and a half years here at Nevada Union, we have aggressively developed our collection, adding thousands of books. In fact, we have managed to raise the average age of the collection by five years.

One way to reach these numbers despite our current disaster of a fiscal situation is to find books at library book sales and thrift stores for pennies on the dollar. We are fortunate in that our student council donates money to the library on an annual basis to fund these excursions. While I only select books that are in excellent condition, I am consistently surprised at what can be found used—and how anxious students can be to get their hands on something “new,” if only to them. I never see books as simply books but as potential reading relationships with my students. The serendipity involved with our collection development can be exhilarating. During book outings, I often find something that fulfills a student’s recent request or need for research. For example, I recently found a book for a pregnant student by a well-qualified author on infancy that I enjoyed reading when I became a new mother. How gratifying it was to share it with her.

continued on next page
This is not to say that we don’t purchase brand new books. The truth is that we use the major-
ity of our budget on new books, and probably not enough on online databases or audio-visual 
materials. We purchase as many bestsellers as we can, based on reviews and student requests. We 
also support our school’s mandated projects such as the Senior Project in which students create 
and follow through with a charitable or career-based project that involves a research paper on 
the subject. Students are so pleased when they learn that we are willing to purchase a title that 
directly supports their work—and even more pleased when “their” book arrives in the library. 
What they may not realize is that this purchase will also help students in future years.

I do not shy away from purchasing duplicates, sometimes many more than might seem pru-
dent. We have umpteen copies of Nicholas Sparks’ many books, for example, because they are 
so popular at our site. We also own close to eighty copies of Ellen Hopkins’ six titles in print, 
which might seem like overkill to many but they are all checked out with multiple holds at 
any given moment. We like to think that the fact that she is coming to our school in May has 
heightened their popularity, but the power of student word-of-mouth is what drove us to invite 
her to our school in the first place.

■ Guideline 6. Make close friends with your art department and display student artwork 
wherever you can find the room. Our walls are filled with student art because our art teachers, 
friends as well as colleagues, work closely with us. We enjoy a particularly rigorous art program 
here at NU in photography, fine arts, and ceramics. Between the three of these wonderful teach-
ers, we have a library that looks like an art gallery every day. The students notice and appreciate 
each new installation, as do we.

■ Guideline 7. Play music—and allow food—during lunch period(s). Many librarians do not 
like the idea of food in the library. We allow it and it works for us. We use a positive method 
of discipline, thanking students continually for cleaning up after themselves. We do not have a 
problem with a mess. Still, we maintain a good relationship with the custodial staff by helping 
out with the cleaning and occasionally baking for them. In return, we get somewhere between 
100-150 kids during each lunch as a reward for our flexibility. Books get checked out in the 
process. We feel like we pull our weight on campus in terms of sheer supervision and achieve 
our literacy goals as well. As for music in the library setting, this idea might be an anathema in 
other library settings, but in our high school we see it as a real magnet. Music greatly helps us 
create a comfortable atmosphere for our students, who can often be found dancing little 
dance moves as they make their way in and out of the library. We try to keep the music selection 
eclectic, including some old school along with newer releases, such as the New Moon sound-
track. The kids recognize and appreciate our attempts at “hipness.” But remember: nothing will 
ever be as hip as Queen!

We must stress that we otherwise maintain a very academic environment in the library, with 
the exception of the time before school, lunch periods, and passing periods. And yes, this has 
presented a challenge for teachers and students who want to use a quiet library during those 
hours but, with flexibility and understanding, we have made it work. It helps that we have a lab 
to which those who want a very quiet area can retreat. We feel that the benefit of having more 
than 100 kids in and out of the library during each of our lunch periods makes any challenges 
well worth it.

■ Guideline 8. Discontinue Fines. After listening to Blanche Woolls speak at the AASL confer-
ence in Reno a few years back, and consulting with my gut, I decided to discontinue fines at our 
library. Recent brain research (http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/teenage-brain-a-
work-in-progress-fact-sheet/index.shtml) supports the theory that the teenage brain is a work in 
progress. We suspected that a thirty-cent fine would be enough to cause a student to avoid the 
library altogether. After consulting directly with several students on the subject, they confirmed 
our suspicion. Moreover, unless fines are specifically allowed by your board policy, it might be 
a problem to collect them. When faced with the question about what’s more important— col-
lecting fines or checking out books—we chose the latter. Our policy is to send gentle overdue 
notices that correspond with our holds list and the books do come back. We are sure that we 
experience some loss, as any library or business does. We call this “acceptable loss” and try to 
bear in mind that some kids have never had any other books in their homes besides ours.
Guideline 9. Encourage students to place book holds and deliver these holds directly to classrooms. We deliver books to classrooms when they arrive that 1) helps to build our relationships with our patrons and 2) generates a lot of excitement about reading. I delivered a copy of *Lovely Bones* to the quarterback last week. What a delight it was for me to hear him defend his reading habit to the entire class. What a great testimonial!

Guideline 10. Develop a positive working relationship between you and everyone on staff. This is truly the key to any library’s success. Administrative support is crucial and we enjoy a great deal of support from both our principal and our superintendent. Both of these men are avid readers and support our library in a deep and meaningful way. But I can honestly say that the best part of working in the Nevada Union High School Library is working alongside Mrs. Annie O’Dea Hestbeck, our library media assistant. We get along so well, both in school and out, and the kids can easily sense this. Our students know that we both love our jobs and each other as well as working with our students and sharing books with them.

In conclusion, simple changes in your library’s policies and practices can make your library infinitely more user-friendly and frankly, more fun. Creating a beautiful and safe atmosphere for students by adding healthy amounts of art, music, food, and even houseplants can have a positive impact on circulation. Going out of your way to maintain positive working relationships with your colleagues, your administrators, and especially with your students and their parents will ultimately serve your cause more than any other factor. Consider incorporating some of the suggestions in this article into your program as they work for you, and do not hesitate to send more student-friendly suggestions my way at jsonnenberg@njuhsd.com.
Accelerated Reader—Using This Tool to Get Students to Read

Dana Stemig

Background
Accelerated Reader (AR) is as often loathed by library staff as it is praised. The loathing often comes from a misunderstanding about how AR works or from poor implementation. AR is nothing more than a tool.

At the four schools where I have worked, AR was going to be used whether I wanted it or not. My choice was to have some say in using it well or not. I decided to do some research, went to Renaissance Learning training (the parent company of Accelerated Reader) and talked to the staff at the school. Short of attending the training, you can read everything about AR at the Renaissance Learning website (www.renlearn.com), search for articles about how others implement AR and, in short, educate yourself. After this immersion, I felt very strongly that AR should not be used as a part of a grade unless it is only used as credit for participation. In some schools, minimum points are used for grading. This proves to be a disadvantage for students who are reading below grade level. I decided that the best way to use AR would be as an incentive to get kids excited about reading.

The Excitement Begins
Throughout six or seven years, I’ve worked with different staff members and in different schools and situations. Last year was my most successful year yet in meeting my goal to get kids excited about reading. I really kept it very, very simple. Here’s how.

AR offers users a Goal-setting chart (see it at http://tinyurl.com/yj9zht4). I wanted to use this chart to reward students who were reading below grade level but were still working diligently at their ability level. The Goal-setting chart sets the number of points that a student is expected to earn during 60, 30, and 20 minutes of daily reading. Each student knows their reading level and there is a chart posted with the month goals for each level. I put up a bulletin board where I posted the names of all the students who met their point goal for the month. Even a student reading three grade levels below could still meet the goal and get his or her name posted on the bulletin board. Some students, who would normally never gain recognition, were well rewarded for their efforts using this approach.

Meeting the Standards
I shared the following state standard with students in grades four through six: “by grade four, students read one-half million words annually” (Ong, 1998, p.21). Students who read 500,000 words by the end of the year would be invited to a party. A bulletin board went up to post names as students met the half million word standard. Fortunately, AR has a word count report based on tests that have been passed.

When you tell fourth through sixth grade students that you want them to read one-half million words, their eyes get really big. I anticipated that they would need to visualize the goal. Because our fourth through sixth graders are usually reading at a wide range of levels, anywhere from 2.0 to 8.0 on the ATOS scale that AR uses, I needed to show them what half of a million words looks like at each of these level. I collected a variety of books at each level. For example, I stacked up books at the 2.0-2.9 level. I referred to the Quiz store on the Renaissance Learning webpage to locate the word count for each book and continued building each stack until I got to one-half million. I did this for every level 2.0 to 6.0. I had these stacks of books on display in the library for a month as I introduced the concept to each of my classes so that they could visualize their goal. To further allow students to see the goal and to chart their progress, I created a chart for each participant. Each month, during a class visit I shared with each student the number of words read. They colored in the corresponding boxes. It was a simple spreadsheet with enough columns and rows for the students to fill in one box for each 5,000 words read.

Donors Come Through
A donor provided a $100 bookstore gift card for the first student to reach 500,000 words. Were we surprised when a student won that in September! The principal was then able to fund another $50 gift card for the second student who reached 500,000. We then began to provide a $25 gift card for the student who read the most words each month.

To motivate the second and third graders, who were not participating in the word count challenge, a local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) auxiliary donated $15 gift cards for those who earned the most points each month. I met the winners at the bookstore every month and helped them to choose their books. For most of the students it was their first time in a book store. There were no other prizes planned because we had no budget for it. Still, at the end of the year, we realized that we had a student who had read 4 million words. Yes, 4 million! The year before the top reader had been given a laptop, and this year we had no prize for this tremendous endeavor. I collected money from teachers, and we bought him a netbook. We were just so proud of him to not recognize him.
The Reading Continues

Here is the best part. Students became so excited about the reading that they were doing that the testing was almost an afterthought. When her daughters won both of that month's gift cards, a mother told me that her kids used to come home and watch TV but, now, they read instead. Students who had never been to the public library before were now telling me what books they were checking out. When asked if he would be reading during winter break, one fifth-grader said, “I can't quit reading.”

Was it AR that made the difference? No, it was the encouragement and collaboration of credentialed Teacher Librarians, library assistants, and classroom teachers along with parents who got them reading. AR is just a tool but, at our school, we have used it in a way that has made our students excited about books and reading.

References

Ready, Set, Go!

They’ve been preparing for months, and now they are ready to do battle. Participants arrive in a sea of colored t-shirts representing their schools. Parents are there, eager and proud. The enthusiasm for literature is intense, almost tangible, and the students are anxiously awaiting their time to shine, to show off their intellectual prowess. What could possibly elicit such literary fervor? America’s Battle of the Books, a program that may be the perfect for you!

America’s Battle of the Books (ABB) is a reading-incentive program where teams of four to six students read approximately five books each from a pre-selected list. The teams compete against other teams from their school or other schools. Competitors answer questions in the form of: In what book did ______________ happen? Team captains discuss answers with their teams. They have 30 seconds to give the correct title and ten additional seconds to give the author’s name. When a team misses the answer, the opposing team gets a chance to steal points—five points for the correct title, two points for the correct author.

The competition for most schools takes place in the spring, during March or April.

A Little History

In the fall of 2006, Millicent Preston, Teacher Librarian at Van Nuys Middle School, challenged Mark Brobosky of Reed Middle School to a Battle of the Books competition. In fact, Preston’s school had written ABB into their schoolwide plan and needed a partner. Van Nuys hosted the competition that spring. The following year, Holmes International Middle School joined Van Nuys and Reed.

By the spring of 2009, the competition had grown to eight middle schools from the San Fernando Valley competing at Holmes in Northridge, California. Each school selected their top two teams to represent them at the final competition. Two divisions comprised of one team from each school competed for gold, silver, and bronze medals. A final round was held between the top teams in each division. Beautiful plexiglass individual trophies inscribed with each student’s name were given to the top team. A school trophy was given to Holmes Middle School which earned the highest number of points overall.

The website (http://www.battleofthebooks.org/) says that America’s Battle of the Books began fifteen years ago. The current program is an outgrowth of an earlier program, The Battle of the Books, which began some sixty years ago in Belridge, California. Currently ABB exists in most states and is also used in schools overseas.

Getting Started

Teacher Librarians are the ideal coordinators because of the library’s high profile within the school and because the program already connects the school, the home, and the library.

There are many good reasons to implement ABB. It supports the California State standards in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades that requires students to read one million words annually. It helps students develop listening, reading comprehension, and study skills. The program also promotes teamwork and collaboration among students while fostering school pride. It brings new students into the library, gives the Teacher Librarian the chance to form more intimate bonds with these students, and is an exciting way to promote literacy. In addition, Battle of the Books is a great way to collaborate with teachers. Once teachers see the competition, they want to participate.

The website has most of the information that you need to run a successful competition. Each spring, the new list of 30 books appears that students need to read to prepare for the following year. As for the books, check your library shelves. You probably have many of the titles. Most are Newbery Award winners or other classic or popular titles. The website also suggests places to buy multiple copies of the books in paperback.”

Advertise the program through flyers, bulletin boards, and announcements in the bulletin and during the public address system. Schedule informational meetings at lunch in the library and visit English classes to explain the program. Make sure to create a frequently-asked questions flyer with the list of the 30 authors and titles on the back. Once you start, your competition will gain momentum each year.

As with any program, your principal’s support is vital. Make a pitch to your school leader and to the leadership team. Clearly outline the benefits to student learning and the connections to the standards. Identify who will take responsibility for each task. Delineate a timeline, identify funding needs and possible sources, and describe what outcomes are expected. Include a plan for evaluation at the end.

Principals can be instrumental in finding funding. Last year our principal wanted to host the ABB regional competition. He financed a major portion of the event to achieve this goal.

Recruiting Participants

Once the program has been approved, it is time to move into action. Schedule a series of informational meetings in the library for students at lunch where you explain the program, hand out book lists, booktalk the books, and distribute individual and team entry forms. Students may sign up as a team or as individuals.
Many students are motivated by the opportunity to form a team of their friends. Others will need help organizing a team from students who signed up individually. Teams get to choose a name and pick a team captain. The promise of a Battle of the Books t-shirt is also a great recruiting tool.

**Keeping the Motivation High**

Plan to have ABB meetings at lunch in the library once a month in the Fall and once a week after winter break. Or form an ABB club and meet after school or at lunch to form literature circles or study groups organized around listed titles. Get laminated lunch passes to students who have filled out their entry forms so that they can get their lunches quickly and attend the meetings. The library may have to be closed during these meetings unless you have someone else to help run the library. In December, hold a party as a reward for students who have read five or more books from the ABB reading list. The entry tickets for the party are student-created questions and answers for three of the books read.

Starting in January, hold meetings once a week to discuss competition strategies. Some examples: meet in teams where students discuss the books with each other; students keep a notebook where they list and describe main characters, events, and small details while reading each book; students memorize all titles and authors; they review and reread books on the lists. Students are encouraged to write their own practice questions on flash cards to test each other. Highly-motivated teams plan for every book on the list to be read by at least two team members. The Teacher Librarian stages mock battles with all teams and reviews official rules for the competition.

**Finding Funding**

Tap all available resources for support. With the principal on board, ask your PTSA or Library Booster clubs for help. Use book fair proceeds. Last year, one of the Teacher Librarians on the ABB team approached local restaurants and stores. As a result, lunch was donated for about 200 people at our regional competition at no cost to the schools. This year, during our local competition, one of the parents expressed a desire to support our competition so that she could advertise her real estate company on the backs of our t-shirts.

This year, 11 schools are sending four teams to our regional competition at Vista Middle School in Van Nuys. Each Teacher Librarian has taken responsibility for some aspect of the final competition. Two of the Teacher Librarians are coordinating a major campaign to get corporate sponsors or grants to support our programs. They are approaching major chains like Costco, California Pizza Kitchen, Target, and neighborhood businesses to donate food or supplies for our competition. Two Teacher Librarians are writing a press release to send to radio stations and newspapers as well as to the district superindent, board members, and other leaders.

As a result of these efforts, we have collected more than $4,900 in gift certificates and cash as well as water, books and certificates for books, pizzas, trophies, and pins for every participant. Enough was collected to pay for all of our expenses for the regional, all t-shirts for volunteers at the event and a field trip for participants following the competition—the UCLA Festival of Books. Several local politicians attended and LAUSD’s public television station came to film our event.

**Conclusion**

As one observer shared with me during our recent competition, “It’s inspiring and rewarding to see students get so excited about reading and demonstrate such passion about a reading competition!” Participants have reported that their reading speed, their interest in reading, and their ability to retain the details of what they read all have improved. In addition, they read great books and made new friends while having a lot of fun. This is true for the Teacher Librarians as well.

When asked how the ABB program affected them, one student said, “I like reading now.” Another noticed, “It affected my reading skills by getting me to reading faster and pay more attention to details.” A third said, “Battle of the Books made me want to read more and expand reading genres.” And still another student observed, “I grew in fluency and so I was able to read faster.”

The ABB program provides rich incentives for students to read more, to master details, and along the way, to increase their enjoyment of reading. The fact that 11 middle schools have sponsored teams to participate in the final competition attests to the program’s appeal. Take it from us and take on the challenge!

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Introduction

Some years ago, while working on my CLAD (Cross Cultural Language Acquisition Development) certificate, I became aware of the barriers the school library presents for students whose first language is not English and whose cultural norms are different than those of the dominant culture. With that experience in mind when I started my doctoral program, I kept thinking about those students for whom library resources may be inaccessible, due to language or cultural barriers. Doctoral class work helped focus my direction as we combed journals, research studies, and the Internet for information, presented our findings in class and discussed what they meant.

One of the findings that struck me during this experience was how many interventions are already in place to help struggling students, ranging from AVID (a program designed to assist student prepare for college, especially those who might not otherwise consider this option) to specialized charter schools such as the KIPP schools. A review of the literature does not indicate that these programs rely on the services of the Teacher Librarian or library resources. At the same time, many state studies statistically validate the positive impact of school library staffing, services, and resources on student academic achievement. These studies focus on the achievement of the overall student population, with limited information collected on how the school library supports the academic needs of struggling sub-groups of students.

In California, test scores indicate that Latino students are not doing as well academically as their Caucasian counterparts. Only 32% of Latino students scored above the 50th percentile in reading on the California Assessment Test, 6th edition, in the 2006-07 school year (California Department of Education, 2007). With Latino students comprising more than half the students in California, it is critical that the educational needs of these youngsters be met.

Research Questions

With little information in the literature about the ways in which school library programs impact or not the achievement of Latino students, this became my dissertation focus. The following questions directed my inquiry:

- What difference is there, if any, between school library access, services, and resources at middle schools with 70% or higher Latino student populations, in comparison to middle schools with 70% or higher Caucasian student populations, in California?
- What impact, if any, do school library access, services, and resources have on middle school Latino students’ reading achievement?
- What library services or resources may be most effective in supporting middle school Latino student academic achievement?

Methodology

To answer these questions, data was collected from the State School Library Survey, with the assistance of Barbara Jeffus, School Library Consultant. The California Department of Education website provided data on ethnicity and student test scores. From that data, 105 schools that were 70% Latino or 70% Caucasian were selected for comparison, and of these, the highest scoring schools were selected for further study and face-to-face interviews. The resulting mixed-methods study compared services between the predominantly Latino and predominantly Caucasian schools, focusing on four areas that may impact student academic. school library access, resources, staffing, and programming. These areas have been determined to correlate with overall student academic success in a number of studies.

Findings

The data indicate that Latino students are provided fewer library services and resources. There are also a higher percentage of poverty indicators associated with English language learners in the predominantly Latino schools, both of which have been found to correlate with lower test scores (Baxter & Smalley, 2003; Burgin & Bracey, 2003; Sinclair-Tarr & Tarr, 2005; Smith, 2006). The findings related to each focus on inquiry follow.

Access

Studies of how most students use library resources may assume ample library access time, but this study found that this may not be true for Latino students. In any school, students compete with other students during limited time periods for library seating, for popular print titles and formats, and for use of limited technology resources. Where the school population is larger, a smaller percentage of students are able to use the library during open periods. The enrollments in the predominantly Latino schools in this study were consistently larger than in the primarily Caucasian schools. In addition, interview data indicated that some parents in lower socioeconomic areas limit their child’s access after school due to safety concerns.
Interview evidence indicates that these barriers can be mitigated by scheduling all classes through the library on a regular basis, especially in larger schools, ensuring access for all students. This is not to negate the option for classes to use the library as needed for projects and research. Flexible use of the library space, with opportunities for classes to check out books while other classes work on research, was an effective solution for one high-performing predominantly Latino school.

Resources

Books are perhaps the most obvious library resource for all students, including Latino students. Other studies have found significant relationships between the number of books in the library collection and student achievement on standardized tests, but in this study, there was no clear relationship between the number of books in the predominantly Latino middle school libraries and end/reading scores. More important than the number of books may be the content of the books in the library. Each of the Teacher Librarians interviewed who served Latino students provided books at a range of reading levels to encourage emergent readers, including titles that are “picture heavy” or clearly intended for lower grades, a strategy also supported in the literature and by studies of language acquisition and free voluntary reading (Krashen, 1993).

Alternate formats may also be effective in providing access to information. Of particular note is the evolution of audiobooks in recent years, from cassette tape to compact disc (CD), and more recently to MP3 digital format. Interviews with Teacher Librarians indicate that audiobooks are popular with Latino students, though quantitative data did not show a significant level of correlation between audio format and academic outcomes.

The Playaway, a small MP3 format audio player, provides digital content and player as a unit, so students are not challenged by a lack of access to appropriate technology, important for students who come from less affluent families. Students who are not fluent readers may find that audiobooks provide a means of acquiring cultural and social capital as well as building vocabulary. Cultural capital, a concept developed by Bourdieu (1991), is the level of comprehension of the cultural knowledge and social skills. Through literature based in American culture, students learn vocabulary and cultural norms that may not be explicitly taught in the classroom. This may be especially true for English language learners, whose grasp of social language often exceeds their comprehension of academic language. The popularity of this format, as indicated in the interviews, supports audiobooks as a motivational instructional tool.

Print versions of magazines are another information resource that was consistently mentioned in the interviews. The Teacher Librarians indicated that these are a popular reading option for Latino students, providing a picture-rich format to help students interpret content. The number of books in the home is an indicator of the level of poverty (Catterall, 1998), but this study indicates that the number of subscription magazines may also be an indicator. One of the Teacher Librarians noted that in her high-poverty community, students have no access to magazines at home.

School library studies have shown that access to subscription databases is a significant factor in student achievement (Lance, Rodney, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2002). Interview data indicate online subscription resources are regularly utilized for research and projects by the highest scoring predominantly Caucasian schools, less so for primarily Latino schools. For students who are struggling with cultural content or vocabulary, many of the available subscription databases provide a choice of reading levels, reducing barriers to accessing academic content. Some also provide links to dictionary definitions and audio pronunciations. That, combined with translation that is built into some of these programs, makes databases a potentially rich resource for Latino students. Not all databases provide the search function in Spanish, however. Once the student finds the article they wish, they can get a translation—but getting to the article can require some fluency in English. Determining the best search term is difficult for many students, no matter what their language fluency.

Staffing

In this study, it was determined that professional staffing is a significant positive factor in reading scores for predominantly Latino schools. Through multiple regression analysis, the level of library staffing was significantly correlated with CAT/6 reading scores. In addition, while all the interview libraries were staffed with full-time certificated Teacher Librarians, they all had paraprofessional support staff. In selecting schools for this study, only professional staffing, student ethnicity and high CAT/6 reading scores were considered, so it is striking that the teacher librarians in this study all have paid paraprofessional support staff. This staffing level positively affects student access, since the more hours that the library is staffed, the more likely that the library will be open, improving student access.
This staffing level also impacts the level of instructional support. Library warehouse functions of circulation and shelving limit or preclude a Teacher Librarian without classified support from developing collaborative lessons, working with classes and individual students in the library, maintaining an interactive website, and selecting resources in varying formats. Classified support is especially important if the Teacher Librarian is to provide additional help for struggling students.

Programming

The quantitative data were limited to whether or not various kinds of instructional support were provided, and the interviews provided clarifying information. The Teacher Librarians interviewed were consistent in the instructional strategies they found effective, though there were differing levels of technology implementation in evidence.

In response to the question about what strategies are employed, the following emerged—scaffolded direct instruction, project-based learning in collaboration with teachers, guided practice using Internet resources, and direct instruction in using various software programs. At predominantly Caucasian schools, Big6 or similar strategies are used to teach the research process, but in Latino schools, Teacher Librarians felt the need to modify the research steps to make the process more accessible for their students. This was done by targeting fewer research steps or selecting specific information literacy standards to use as a basis for instruction.

All the Teacher Librarians emphasized the importance of one-on-one positive contact with students to encourage and support reading. They talked about establishing a personal connection with students and helping each student find just the right book. One Teacher Librarian noted that, with the focus on testing and student outcomes, schools may be losing sight of the importance of students’ personal growth. She felt that the library provided a place where this could be supported.

Conclusion

This study determined that the level of professional Teacher Librarian school library staffing is a significant factor in helping Latino student achieve academically, as measured by standardized test scores. Very real barriers of language and poverty require extra support from schools. The Teacher Librarian can be an important component of an overall educational plan to increase academic achievement, especially that of Latino youngsters.

References


JEANNE NELSON has worked in school libraries at the elementary, middle school, high school, and district levels. She has served on the CSLA Board, Friends of the Murrieta Library Board, Murrieta City Library Commission, and the Mt. Palomar Library Technology Advisory Committee. Her doctoral dissertation focused on the impact of school library staffing and resources in supporting academic achievement of Latino middle school students.
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Serendipitous Learning with Social Bookmarking

Janice Stearns

The Trouble with Bookmarking

In this age of overwhelming information on the web, it is important to have a system for saving and organizing web resources so that they can be easily accessed. Web browsers have a tool for bookmarking resources and organizing them into folders as “favorites” but this can become unwieldy as more folders and bookmarks are added. Additionally, this collection of bookmarks can only be accessed from the one computer on which they are saved.

What Social Bookmarking Does

Social bookmarking is a better solution for saving and organizing bookmarks online. Instead of saving bookmarks on the web browser of a local computer, users store those bookmarks online using free tools like Delicious (http://delicious.com) and Diigo (http://diigo.com). They are “social” because users can share these collections of online bookmarks with others via their account. Since these collections of bookmarked resources are available on the web, they can be accessed on any web-enabled device, including smart phones and iPod Touches.

Social bookmarking tools allow users to store, annotate, and share their favorite resources online. These tools not only have an annotation section that can be used to describe the web resources in complete sentences, but also a way to “tag” or categorize resources. “Tags,” a term for a kind of “folksonomy” (Pink, 2005), are words that people use to classify or categorize a resource. This system of tags is far more efficient than storing resources in electronic folders since more than one tag can be assigned to a bookmark. Tags are also easily searchable. If a teacher and his students create a unique tag for their classroom, and all students use that tag when bookmarking resources, then all resources can be easily found and shared among the learners in the classroom. For example, students in a science classroom, say Room 312, are studying mitosis. All students could bookmark and “tag” the resources they find on mitosis with “mitosis” and “SciRoom312.” This creates a collaborative collection of resources that are easily searchable by using the agreed upon tags in the social bookmarking search tool.

Since social bookmarks are stored online, they can be shared with others. For example, in my role as a technology teacher educator, I like to share the resources I have collected on social bookmarking with adult learners. My collection of web resources is found by visiting http://delicious.com/district6/socialbookmarking. Notice that the web address consists of the delicious website, my username (district6), and the tag I used to describe all the resources I have tagged “socialbooking.” As I tag more resources with the descriptor “socialbookmarking,” throughout time this collection of resources is dynamically updated.

This ability to continually update tagged resources is especially useful for teacher librarians who wish to share a collection of resources with students. No longer is there a need to physically type in resources on a web page. The teacher librarian only needs to share the web address of the collection of tagged resources with potential users.

Expand the Conversation

The “social” part of tools like Delicious or Diigo goes beyond simply sharing resources with others. It allows you to add other users to your network who are also sharing web resources. Each web resource stored on these sites has data that shows who else is saving this resource. You can easily add other students and educators to your network who are sharing sites of similar interests. This gives a user even more access to quality resources that could not be easily found using traditional search methods. For example, since I’ve added many educators and librarians to my network on Delicious, my search for the “socialbookmarking” tag in my network results in rich resources, many of which have been bookmarked by those in my network, http://delicious.com/network/district6/socialbookmarking. Educators and librarians whom I have added to my network, in turn, add me to their network, and thus have access to all of the bookmarks in our collective networks. We are building a social network around sharing resources that are important to us.

Diigo takes social bookmarking to a higher level by allowing users to highlight text, add comments, and even sticky notes to any web page. These can be private, shared with a group, or shared publicly with any other Diigo user. This can be transformative in the way readers interact with online text (Richardson, 2009). Additionally, Diigo offers educators the ability to create student users, arranged in private classroom groups—for free! (http://www.diigo.com/education) Students can interact with text collaboratively in ways never before possible. Rich conversations around text can be ongoing and
interactive. Teacher Librarians can guide students to think critically about text (Picardo, 2009).

Diigo also has a tool that allows you to save bookmarks simultaneously to Delicious. This way, you not only have a backup of your web resources, but you can also take advantage of the rich, unique set of tools that each application has to offer.

To learn more about using social bookmarking, please visit http://readwriteweb.wikispaces.com/socialbookmarks.

References


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Social bookmarking tools allow users to store, annotate, and share their favorite resources online.
A Moment of Serendipity

Third-grader Brianna stood in the doorway of the ballroom with butterflies in her stomach and looked out over the gardens. People were sauntering up the walkways to the annual California Readers We Love California Authors and Artists luncheon at Pickwick Gardens in Burbank in February, 2000. Rounding the corner strode a woman, dressed in a Rainbow costume in honor of her new book The Rainbow and You. “Oh my gosh!” thought Brianna, “It’s Robin Rector Krupp, my author!”

Brianna started running towards her. When Robin spotted Brianna, she opened her arms for their embrace. Then Robin stepped back. “You are dressed up as a character from my book, Let’s Go Traveling in Mexico.” “That’s right!” exclaimed Brianna.

Brianna was a student from Pomelo Elementary School in the west San Fernando Valley, part of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Her school had won the Ed Pert Award, a collection of 100 books by California authors. As part of the program implemented by the school, as described in their winning application, every third grader at Pomelo had chosen a book from the California Collection and had become a character in that book. Each third grader had designed and dressed in costume, had written a speech from the character’s point of view, and had stepped into the spotlight on a special day at the school known as “California Character Day.” Brianna was one of four students who had come to the luncheon in California Character Day.

Background

California Readers is an organization of teachers, Teacher Librarians, authors, and illustrators. For the past 12 years, the group has been connecting students and educators with authors and artists who live in California. Created as a non-profit organization in 1996, California Readers has given 40 awards, each of 100 books and an author visit, valued at $114,000, and has sponsored 48 author visits to schools affecting the lives of 30,000 students. On the last Saturday in February each year, the organization hosts the We Love California Authors and Artists luncheon in Burbank, California. The luncheon is an opportunity for authors and artists and educators to get to know one another and foster further contacts. It is also a time when schools and authors win awards.

Awards Offered

There are three awards that a school can win. The first is the Ed Pert Award, named for a beloved Los Angeles bookseller. The award consists of a collection of 100 books as well as an author visit to the school. There are three collections: one for an elementary school audience, one for middle schoolers, and one for high school readers. The school applies for one of the three collections.

A committee of reviewers consisting of various types of educators reads and evaluates more than 2,000 books written and/or illustrated by California authors and artists during the course of a year. Reviewers consider each book’s quality as well as the reading and interest levels of the book and relevance to curricular areas. Finally, in July, the committee meets to select the 100 books. Each collection of books is updated and revised each year.

Meanwhile, by December 1 each year, schools at different levels are invited to apply for one of the three collections. The proposals describe an innovative program for meeting educational standards while engaging students with the California Collection.

A variety of creative ideas have been proposed and implemented. In one winning application, students used Google to create maps of the settings in a story. In another, students designed vests with clear pockets filled with descriptions, art, or text from a story that they would in the library to motivate interest in the California Collection. Another school had students make hand-made puppets of favorite characters from chosen stories.
Once a school wins an Ed Pert Award, the successful applicants can compete the following year for the President’s Award. Winners of the Ed Pert Award attend the following year’s luncheon and create a display of their project, bringing representatives from the school to share information about the success of their project. The displays are judged at the luncheon by a committee chaired by the President-elect and composed of past award winners. The winning school is able to meet and get to know an author or artist with whom they make arrangements for a visit to the school, courtesy of California Readers.

The third award is the Bonnie O’Brien Award, named for the founder. A school that continues to implement its Ed Pert Award-winning project during successive years is eligible. Such a school submits a portfolio of photographs, student writing, publicity, and data about the impact the award has had on the school. Given each year, the winning portfolio earns the school a lighted bookcase with glass shelves for the school library to display the California Collection. A very special author visit, by the author winning the Leo Politi Golden Author Award, is provided to the school on the Friday before the luncheon.

Any school in Southern California, that has at least one educator member of California Readers, may apply for the Ed Pert Award. They must be willing to send a delegation to the luncheon in February in case they win the Award, and they must be willing to do a school display at the luncheon in February the following year.

Authors are also recognized by California Readers. The author with the most books in the California Collections throughout time is awarded the Leo Politi Golden Author Award. The award was named after Leo Politi, who was a California author and artist whose work captured the ethnic diversity of Los Angeles and whose murals and paintings can still be seen throughout the city. The winning author is invited to make a presentation to students, at the school winning the Bonnie O’Brien Award, the day before the annual luncheon. At the luncheon, this author also speaks and is presented with this handsome award that is an acrylic trophy plus a copy of the Leo Politi Book published by California Readers.

Another Serendipitous Moment

In 2005, the Leo Politi Golden Author was Paul Fleischman. Dylan, a student from Lockhurst Elementary School, a winner of the Ed Pert Award, had created a marionette of the character, Wesley, from Westlandia, a book in the California Collection. The marionette had been on display in the school library and the library aide, Karla Forbes, brought the puppet to the luncheon to show Mr. Fleischman. He was so impressed that he wanted to take it home but Karla would not part with it. Instead, the author autographed the base of the puppet stand and it was returned to Lockhurst. When the student who had made the puppet noticed that the signature had been added, he was ecstatic that the author had seen his work.

Learn More

Information about our sponsors, the Award applications, and the books in the California Collections is available on our website at californiareaders.org. The website also has numerous resources for teachers and students to use, including lesson plans, more than 300 author interviews, and links to more than 2,000 author and artist websites. On the Events page we encourage anyone to submit information about an author/artist event at a school, library, or other location in the state.

The annual luncheon was held on Saturday, February 27, 2010 at the Castaways Restaurant in Burbank. Visit the website for next year’s luncheon program. Check us out!

BONNIE O’BRIAN has served as the Authors and Awards Chair for California Readers from 2006 to 2009. She is the retired Supervisor of Library Services for Los Angeles USD from 1987 to 2003. She served as President of CSLA in 1994 and was also a Governor’s Appointee to the Education Council for Technology and Learning from 1985 to 1990. She represented school libraries in the Citizen Ambassador Program visiting Russia, Lithuania, and Czechoslovakia in 1992.
Reading and Writing Nonfiction: A Study in Serendipity

Gretchen Woelfle

Stories Happen
This summer, I took a five-day trip to San Juan Island in Washington State. It was meant to be a vacation of cycling, hiking, and kayaking. No writing, no research, no interviews—just a vacation. And it was—until the second day. That morning we cycled to San Juan Island Historical Park and I learned about the Pig War of 1859, which culminated in a twelve-year joint occupation on opposite ends of the island by British and American troops. In the end, the only casualty was a pig. But it became an international incident that was eventually settled by the Emperor of Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm I.

And so my vacation turned into a research trip. I still went hiking and cycling and kayaking, but I also bought books at the park’s visitor centers, explored the two military camps, photographed plaques along the trails, questioned the park rangers, and began to plot a story.

Memo to self #1: Never throw away potentially tax-deductible boarding passes travel receipts.
Memo to self #2: Kayak rental is tax-deductible, for how else could I experience the tricky winds and currents that drowned several English soldiers?

Write What You Want to Know
An old adage tells us to write what we know. I disagree. I write about what I don’t know, but want to learn. I (and other writers I know) enjoy research at least as much—and sometimes more—than writing, especially when it means traveling to beauty spots like the Pacific Northwest. Is that why I lean towards writing nonfiction? Perhaps.

When serendipity hands me a subject, I first go to the library—even in this Internet era—and read all the obvious books. Then I read more books and journal articles cited in the footnotes. Here the Internet shines. Many scholarly journals that used to be bound in musty volumes deep in the bowels of large university libraries now glow on a brightly-lit screen with a flick of a key. Centuries-old books and pamphlets have been uploaded to university websites. Then there’s the pleasure of browsing websites where I find serendipitous people and stories I wouldn’t have found before the Internet.

As for photo research, the Internet is an author’s dream-come-true, as I learned in researching illustrations for Jeannette Rankin: Political Pioneer, a middle grade biography. Back in the 1990s, I used to make wish lists of illustrations, fax them to the Library of Congress, wait three weeks for a package of photocopies to arrive, write a letter, wait some more, etc. etc. Now their collection is on the web with the delicious possibility of finding that odd little print or photo that sparkles on the page. Serendipity enhanced by technology.

One Book Leads to Another
Perhaps the most serendipitous part of writing nonfiction occurs when I’m researching one book and discover my next one. While reading about Dutch windmills for The Wind at Work, I came across the story of a cat that saved a baby’s life when a dijk broke and flooded a town. At that moment, I conceived the idea for Katje the Windmill Cat. More recently, while researching women in the American Revolution for a picture book biography, I found not one more subject, but a dozen. The cornucopia of research overflows.

Being There
As much as I love surfing the net, I love researching onsite even more. No matter how obscure the subject, some local historian—often an amateur—or scientist shares your passion. I visited a volunteer windmiller in Holland. He must run his windmill every weekend because the rattling and shaking of the beams and gears discourages woodworms from laying eggs there. No book mentioned that.

One freezing January day, I got an all-day tour of a historic Massachusetts house and town with a professional historian who filled me with far more folklore, history, and natural history than any guidebook could provide. And then there was the private tour backstage Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London, climbing the ladder to the attic and beyond, to “heaven”—the spot from which they shoot the cannon or lower the stunt men. Tourists are never allowed up there, but the magic password—children’s nonfiction writer—opens many doors.
Beyond Research

My serendipity story doesn't end with research, but continues beyond a book's publication, thanks to my website (www.gretchenwoelfle.com), blog, and personal appearances. For example, meeting a descendant of Jeannette Rankin at the National Book Festival was a nice surprise. Writing on a group blog, Interesting Nonfiction for Kids (http://www.inkrethink.blogspot.com), has led to contacts with writers and editors hitherto unknown. Twenty-three of its contributing authors have just launched Ink Think Tank (www.inkthinktank.com) with a free searchable database of all our books categorized by subject, grade levels and curriculum standards. My website has been discovered by long-lost relatives and old boyfriends—but that's another story.

My most intriguing website visitor has been a Dutch historian. My sources for Katje the Windmill Cat described the flood and the rescue, but I found no record of the principal actors. My Dutch correspondent begged to differ. He knew the name of the rescued baby and her descendents who, after 700 years, still live in the same town. And so he and I and the World Wide Web could write an epilogue to a story that began as a serendipitous gem unearthed for another book entirely.

Traveling the world, meeting impassioned people, learning more about our amazing world past and present, and writing about it—with the prospect of serendipity around any corner—I can't think of a better job, can you?

GRETCHEN WOELFLE spoke at the CSLA Conference in November 2009. Her books include The Wind at Work: An Activity Guide to Windmills; Katje the Windmill Cat; Animal Families, Animal Friends; and Jeannette Rankin: Political Pioneer. Her first historical novel, set in Elizabethan London, will be published in 2011. When Woelfle is not traveling the world looking for stories, she lives in Los Angeles.
As a graduate student newly exposed to theories about language and literacy development, I have been thinking about the relationship between them and the evolving place of school libraries in the school culture and students' literate lives. Three theoretical perspectives may be useful to school librarians as they, too, think about ways to relate to the core program in schools. These three theories have helped me to position the school library centrally in the literacy life of the school.

As Teacher Librarians, we need to speak the language of literacy and learning researchers in order to understand their theoretical constructs and articulate the place of school library programs in these arenas. An understanding of literacy theory applied to education settings can clarify the central and significant role of school libraries, providing librarians with language to be strong advocates outside the library field. Seeing the library as central to the teaching and learning missions of the school requires a theoretical construct that puts it there. It is not enough to simply say that the school library program is the heart of learning in the school. We need to communicate the role of the school library in terms of student literacy development. We need to link the collaborative work between Teacher Librarians and classroom teachers with a sound basis in learning theory. We need to apply the research in reading comprehension and reading strategy instruction to our own work in helping students integrate these learning strategies into their daily practices. In short, we need to understand the roles we play in developing students' literacy at deeper levels.

In this article, I will touch on three fundamental issues for school librarianship that are connected to literacy theory:

- the school library's position in the school curriculum;
- the use of new literacies, multimodal and technological; and
- the process of collaborative practice across grade levels and content areas.

Each, taken in turn, can illuminate the powerful, creative, and productive territory contribution of the school library.

First, Third Space theories (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Tejada, 1999; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004) are used to describe a creative place between cultures, languages, and usual literacy practices that can be a site for productive change in schools. In this theoretical perspective, the languages and other cultural differences students bring to school are seen as important contributors to the learning environment. Third Space theories also allow us to conceptualize collaborative practice as teachers and teacher librarians bridge the distance between content area teaching goals and librarianship in the school library. By seeing the differences in instruction between the teacher librarian's pedagogy and the classroom teacher's curriculum as strengths—not liabilities—the school library becomes a unique center for student learning. As a Third Space, the school library is truly central to students' literacy growth, providing learning opportunities that do not happen elsewhere in the school. The school library is not only a "third place" (Heeger, 2006), different from the physical learning places in the classroom and at home, but also an ideological Third Space—representing a distinct set of values about inquiry, knowledge, and knowing. The school library provides a wealth of curriculum-based resources as well as opportunities for students to learn at a personal level of inquiry, outside the assigned curriculum. In Third Space theory, these extracurricular areas of inquiry are highly valued as significant to students' learning and find a home in the broad goals of school librarianship.

A second important theory for school librarians to be aware of in advocating for the importance of school libraries and school librarianship is the theory of multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996), as well as this theory's connection developing a literate identity (Gee, 1991). Recent literacy theory acknowledges new technology practices and out-of-school literacy preferences, named multiliteracies, in recognition of the multiple ways that students use texts of all types in a multitude of engagements in their everyday lives. These practices include the role of design and agency in students' lives as they fashion new identities online and off. We've all seen students engaged in writing rap and poetry, reading blogs and messages of all sorts, and following paths of personal interest. Literacy is newly described in this way—as a set of practices, engagements, and beliefs using a diversity of texts, where individual interest is paramount in driving motivation. This is a departure from traditional and canonical notions of literacy. Seeing literacy in this way helps us to understand the value of the school library as a unique site for creating opportunities to design the self through independent inquiry while also exercising traditional literacy skills.

A third crucial issue in school librarianship is collaboration. Understanding collaboration in relation to Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, or CHAT (Engeström, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978) illuminates this practice in a new way. CHAT describes the ways in which learning is a social, cooperative activity, developed over time with the use of specific culturally-created tools (especially language). When we understand classroom or content area instruction and school librarianship as different activity systems, we gain insight into the nature of successful collaborative practice. Understanding CHAT helps situate the library in the life of the school community, having separate, but compatible rules and curricular goals. These differences might be expressed in the kinds of texts we consider literate texts, for instance, in valuing gaming activities, graphic
nods, and books less than 150 pages long. When the school library and classrooms are conceived of as different activity systems with some important commonalities, the school library can occupy a distinct and valued position in a community of learners. And when the teacher and Teacher Librarian bridge their fields of expertise and different content objectives, the library’s collection of multimodal materials empowers student choice and accommodates differentiated instruction.

I must admit that when I started my studies at UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education, I was singularly focused on understanding the process of reading and the development of reading comprehension in order to widen my perspective on the role of the school librarian and school libraries in that area. Since then, I have come to see the school library more broadly as a site for learning and practicing multiple literacies in contemporary education, tied tightly to research in both fields. I have been trying to re-imagine and re-theorize the role of the school library program in the overall school program, to bridge the seeming gap between two fields and two literatures—research and theory in the education domain and in the domain of school librarianship. When we, as Teacher Librarians, have a command over literacy and learning theory to advocate on behalf of students’ literacy growth in school libraries, we impact opportunities for improved student achievement (Goodin, 2009). When we can articulate theory for the productive literacy and learning space in the school library as one that serves both the school’s curriculum and the individual’s independent inquiry (as our information literacy standards clearly outline), we strengthen the school library’s perceived value.

I continue to work on developing a new conceptual frame for the school library based in literacy theory in order to share it with teachers and Teacher Librarians. With the school library seen as a foundational Third Space for learning, we can imagine the multiple intersections of theories: the collaborative activity systems of CHAT, the overlapping practices of traditional and new multiliteracies, and the impact of new media and strategy development on students’ reading comprehension.

References

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An Analysis of the PIRLS (2006) Data: Can the School Library Reduce the Effect of Poverty on Reading Achievement?

Stephen Krashen, Syying Lee, and Jeff McQuillan

Introduction

It has been firmly established that more reading leads to better reading (and writing, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar), and that more access to books results in more reading (Krashen, 2004). It is thus reasonable to hypothesize that more access to books is related to better reading. This prediction has been confirmed by a number of studies showing a positive relationship between library quality and reading achievement (McQuillan, 1998; Lance, 2004, and studies reviewed in Krashen, 2004).

The PIRLS Study

PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) administered a reading test to fourth graders in 40 countries (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, and Foy, 2006). PIRLS provides not only test scores, but also the results of an extensive questionnaire given to teachers and students, including attitudes, reading behavior outside of school, and classroom practices. PIRLS also supplies data on socio-economic class.

We present here an analysis of the PIRLS 2006 data, selecting a few factors that theory predicts will be important predictors of reading achievement. We only included countries for which complete data was available for all factors. Most countries tested about 4000 students from about 150 schools.

Countries included in the analysis were: Austria, Belgium (both French and Flemish), Bulgaria, Canada (five provinces analyzed separately), Taiwan, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad, and Tobago.

The Reading Test

The Reading Test consisted of five literary passages and five informational passages, with each passage followed by approximately 12 questions, half multiple-choice and half requiring students to write their own answers. The tests were originally written in English and then translated into 45 languages.

Predictors

Socio-economic status (SES): SES has a profound effect on reading development, as well as on school performance in general (e.g. White, 1982). To measure SES, the Human Development Index (HDI), developed by the United Nations, was used. The Human Development Index is an average of three factors: education (adult literacy rates, school enrollment), life expectancy, and wealth (logarithm of income) (http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/hdi/). Higher HDI means higher literacy, life expectancy, and wealth.

Sustained Silent Reading SSR: There is abundant evidence that self-selected reading done in school is effective in increasing reading proficiency (Krashen, 2004). The SSR (sustained silent reading) predictor used in this study was the percentage of students who read independently in school every day or almost every day in each country.

The School Library: As noted earlier, a number of studies have shown that library quality is related to reading achievement. In this study, the library factor was represented by the percentage of school libraries in each country with more than 500 books.

Instruction: Direct instruction in reading, assumed to be effective, was represented by the average hours per week devoted to reading instruction in each country.

Inter-Correlations

Table 1 presents the inter-correlations among all the variables (means and standard deviations are presented as table A1 in the Appendix, next page). As is always the case of studies of this kind, children from higher SES backgrounds had higher scores on the reading test (r = .71). Both independent reading in school and access to a school library with more than 500 books were positively related to reading performance. Amount of instruction was negatively correlated with reading test scores: those with more instruction did slightly worse on the reading test (r = -.26).
Table 1: PIRLS: Inter-correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Read Prof</th>
<th>SES (HDI)</th>
<th>SSR</th>
<th>Sch. Lib.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES (HDI)</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sch Lib</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HDI = Human Development Index (based on life expectancy, education, wealth)

Inspection of Table 1 shows that some of the predictors are correlated with each other. In higher SES countries, for example, there were higher percentages of children who did independent reading in school \(r = .43\) and higher percentages of students who had access to a school library with 500 books or more \(r = .37\).

Multiple regression allows us to determine the impact of each predictor independent of the others, that is, with the others held constant. For example, it allows us to determine the impact of SES and SSR as if these predictors were not correlated.

Table 2 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis (a more detailed table is presented in the Appendix as table A2). The “beta” column indicates the strength of each predictor, compared to the others. As was the case in Table 1, SES is the strongest predictor, and is easily statistically significant \(p = .005\). SSR remains a positive predictor of reading performance, and falls just short of statistical significance. Access to a school library is a strong predictor, nearly as strong as poverty. Once again, the effect of instruction is negative, and close to statistical significance.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>predictor</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r^2 = .63)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(p = \text{probability that the result could have occurred by chance. } p = .005 \text{ means that the odds are five in a thousand chance this result could have occurred by chance (highly unlikely). Normal procedure is to consider } p = .05 \text{ or less to be 'statistically significant.'} \)

Table 2 also indicates that \(r^2 = .63\), meaning that the four variables considered here account for 63% of the variability in reading test scores. In other words, if we know the SES level of a country (HDI score), the percentage of children who do independent reading in school, the percentage of children who have access to a library of 500 books or more, and the amount of instruction, this is 63% of the information we need to predict their reading score. This \(r^2\) is quite high, but is similar to the \(r^2\) found in previous studies of this kind in the United States (McQuillan, 1988).

Discussion

Our results confirm that variables related to reading are powerful predictors of reading test scores. High SES generally means easy access to books outside of school, more SSR time means more reading, access to libraries is associated with more reading (Krashen, 2004), and more time devoted to direct reading instruction could mean less time devoted to actual reading.

The impact of the library can also be estimated using multiple regression. The average PIRLS score is 500. PIRLS defines levels as follows: Advanced = 625; High = 550; Intermediate = 475; Low = 400. If a country has a PIRLS score of 400, with no children having access to school libraries with more than 500 books, and then takes steps so that all children in the country have access to school libraries with more than 500 books and makes no other changes, the multiple regression analysis predicts that their PIRLS score would improve from 400 to 480, moving them from “low” to “intermediate.” (See Note in Appendix for details on this calculation.)

The finding that the impact of the school library was nearly as strong as the impact of SES suggests that the library can, to at least some extent, mitigate the effects of low SES on reading. Several studies confirm that children of poverty have little access to books at home or in their community (Krashen, 2004); the school library may be the only source of books for these children.

continued on next page
The negative relationship between instruction and reading proficiency could be a result of schools offering more direct instruction to those who need it most. Our results, however, are consistent with reports showing little or no effect of intensive skill-based reading instruction on tests that require children to understand what they read (Garan, 2001; Krashen, 2009). What we can conclude is that the research shows that the library is a better investment than heavy skills-based reading teaching.

It could be argued that our analysis is flawed because it was based only on a few factors, predictors that we selected in advance. A more complex or full analysis based on as much information provided by PIRLS as possible is included in Krashen, Lee, and McQuillan, forthcoming, and the results are similar to what was reported here.

Acknowledgment
We thank Anna Koval and Connie Williams for helpful comments.

References

Appendix
Table A1: Means and standard deviations of all variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>READING</td>
<td>506.3</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sch Lib</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A2: Multiple regression (detailed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>predictor</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>stand error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>307.1</td>
<td>105.3</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school libr</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instruction</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-14.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r² = .63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Estimates of gain based on HDI = .8; SSR = 44; School Library = 0, 100%; Instruction = 2.46
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