

Confused about Common Core?

Host a Learning Day at Your Library

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What exactly is Common Core? And why should librarians care about it? Those seem to be the buzzwords of the past few years.

As a library and information science student at Syracuse University specializing in school media, I was aware that Common Core was becoming more relevant with teachers, students, and librarians. And while the Common Core has been referenced more and more in discussions, publications, and conferences, many still wonder about what exactly it means for libraries.

At a recent New York Library Association Conference, I learned so much about the Common Core that I finally understood what it was all about. Inspired, I talked with Fayetteville (NY) Free Library's (FFL) Executive Director Sue Considine about organizing and hosting a Common Core Learning Day for community educators.

We wanted to share what our library has been doing to support the Common Core. As Considine comments, "The FFL's mission is to provide access to ideas and information. Our vision, through providing this access, is to be the community's best resource—to support all of the lives of the community, their aspirations and goals.

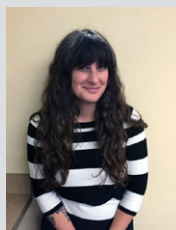
"The Common Core Standards required us, as facilitators of access to resources, to examine how—through our collections, programs, services, and technologies—we can ensure that our teachers, students' and families' needs are met and to help ensure their success in light of these new educational standards. Further, once we determined best strategies to reach our goals in our community, it was our professional responsibility to share what we have learned, where we have failed and to discuss new opportunities with our colleagues. We are all in this together!"

Organizing the Event

The FFL Common Core Learning Day was held May 31, 2013; attendees included school and public librarians, professors, public library directors, students, and educators from community organizations such as the zoo.

Our knowledgeable speakers were leaders in the library field—Dr. Barbara Stripling, assistant professor of practice at Syracuse University and past president of the American Library Association; Sue Kowalski, Pine Grove Middle School librarian and past president of the New York Library Association Section for School Libraries; and Jim Belair, school library system director at Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES in New York. Margaret Portier, director of Innovative Family Services, and I also presented on what FFL was doing to support teachers, students, and parents. We also had support from the Onondaga County Public Library System.

The first step was to find speakers who would not only be knowledgeable but passionate about their careers, and charismatic enough to keep the attention of an audience for a full day. Using my contacts, I sent out emails to the speakers with dates and a general overview of what we were trying to accomplish. I quickly got three acceptances.



Meredith Levine is Director of Family Engagement at the Fayetteville (NY) Free Library and a member of ALSC's School-Age Programs and Services Committee.



FFL's Director of Family Engagement, Meredith Levine, and Director of Innovative Family Services, Margaret Portier, wrap up the day talking about the programs, services, and collections that the FFL has adapted to support teachers, students, and parents with the Common Core.

How can *you* do this? Tap into your resources and your community and network at conferences, and you will be astonished by the experts who can help you create your own event. We found local experts, but if you have trouble getting presenters in person, Skype is a free and easy alternative.

After successfully booking speakers months in advance, we established our goal of helping the community develop a better understanding of the Common Core. We wanted them to leave with action items to implement in their libraries to support students, teachers, and parents.

As a public library, we do not take a stance on the Common Core, but rather provide access to the best resources possible to support the initiative. With our goal set, we constructed an agenda—along with the speakers—to keep the day flowing, fresh, and non-repetitive.

Marketing the Event

Brenda Shea, FFL's director of marketing and community relations, emailed school librarians and teachers in all of the county districts, as well as public librarians, about the event. She also posted the event on the Syracuse University listserv to attract students, and on the Central NY Library Resources Council website. We also invited educators from other community organizations and reached out to surrounding systems, making this a regional event.

On the invitation, we listed our learning objectives.

- What are the Common Core standards? Why are they important? Why should we care?
- Find out how public librarians can be school librarians' best resource.



FFL Common Core Learning Day attendees from all over upstate New York taking a break from learning and enjoying a great lunch and conversation before the afternoon sessions begin.

- Discover practical ways that school librarians and public librarians can work together.
- What are public libraries and librarians doing now? Hear examples of collection development and programming ideas to support Common Core learning.
- Take part in a facilitated discussion to help put ideas into action.

I kept track of all registrants and attendees in an Excel spreadsheet to record names, titles, employers, and email addresses so we could send supplemental materials after the event.

Facilitating the Event

The day finally came; we were prepared and excited! The community room was set up, and we had name tags ready for each participant and a hashtag for Twitter users, #FFLCCDay!

Stripling used a PowerPoint presentation and opened with an introduction to Common Core State Standards for libraries and touched on what they are from a national standpoint. Belair spoke on public libraries' involvement in Common Core. Kowalski discussed the school library perspective and how public librarians can support them.

After breakout sessions, Portier and I presented on what the FFL was doing to support Common Core, including our Dewey Hybrid system and STEM programming.

With fifty-five attendees, the event exceeded our expectations, and we believe it went a long way in explaining how libraries play such an important role in supporting the public and community educators in Common Core resources. ↺

To view the FFL speakers' presentations online, visit <http://fflib.org/learn/common-core>.