

# Incorporating Intellectual Freedom and Information Literacy into Programming

Meagan Albright and Ashley J. Brown



**Meagan Albright** is a Youth Services Librarian III at the Nova Southeastern University Alvin Sherman Library, Research and Information Technology Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. **Ashley J. Brown** is an Engagement and Outreach Librarian at Auburn (AL) Public Library. Both have served on the ALSC Intellectual Freedom Committee.



Raising awareness of intellectual freedom and information literacy is important, and not just during Banned Books Week. Just like sneaking healthy food into a kid's meal, these techniques for incorporating these topics will enrich the work you already do as a librarian without disrupting your programming routine. (Note: see sidebar on the next page for ready-made program ideas).

Here are some tips for incorporating the topic during storytimes.

- Invite a co-storyteller to read a dual point of view story with you to model different points of view during storytime. Example: *Interrupting Chicken and the Elephant of Surprise* by David Ezra Stein.
- Include a display of different versions of the same story and encourage families to compare and contrast the books when reading them at home.
- Tell parents about ALSC's Notable Children's Digital Media lists and talk about trusted online sources. [www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/ncdm](http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/ncdm).
- Include some of the suggested books below in another storytime. For example, if you are doing a storytime about birds, read Mac Barnett's *Telephone* or include it in your book display.
- Informally chat with parents and caregivers at the end of storytime about choosing books for and with their children. Not every book is for every reader or family, and that's okay.
- Pair fiction books with nonfiction books to offer a choice between reading for knowledge and reading for pleasure.
- Allow children to choose a book that may, on its face, be considered too "difficult" for them to read. Use this opportunity to incorporate literacy by doing a picture walk, which encourages readers to use pictures as clues to understand the story. Begin with looking at the front cover and asking what they think the story will be about. As you flip through the pages, prompt a discussion by using guided questions like, "What is happening in this picture?" and "How do you think the character feels?" Allow children to use their imagination as they narrate the story.
- Sometimes the best way to start a conversation is by defining the topic. Address the adults at storytime and share this definition from ALA: "Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (<https://literacy.ala.org/information-literacy>). &

## Try These Ready-Made Programs

### THEME: Free to Choose

It's important to recognize and respect children's independence and autonomy. While you can apply this concept to any storytime, you may wish to start with a "librarian's favorites" so you will be comfortable, confident, and enjoy reading any of the books the children choose.

Start storytime by saying: "Grown-ups make choices for you every day. Wouldn't it be fun if you were in charge at storytime? You all get to pick what books we read and what songs we sing today!" Make song cards for popular storytime songs and put them on a felt board. Select a volunteer to pick a song from the board, or have children vote. Include a display of several books, briefly tell the children about each of the books, then let them decide which book you will read.

**Read:** *Reading Makes You Feel Good* by Todd Parr; *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* by Richard Byrne; *We Are in A Book* by Mo Willems.

**Alternate Titles:** *The Monster at the End of This Book* by Jon Stone; *A Perfectly Messed Up Story* by Patrick McDonnell; *Open Very Carefully: A Book with Bite* by Nick Brown.

**Extension Activity:** Create a Mad Libs version of a well-known story. Since young children will not be familiar with concepts like verb and adjective, create a color-coded grab bag of words (yellow for verbs, green for adjectives, etc.) for children to randomly select words to complete the Mad Libs.

### THEME: Mixed Messages

Play a game of "telephone" and talk about how the word or phrase changed from one person to the next.

**Read:** *Telephone* by Mac Barnett; *The Monster at the End of This Book* by Jon Stone

**Alternate Titles:** *Oink-a-Doodle-Moo* by Jeff Czekaj; *Elephant in the Dark* by Mina Javaherbin

**Books for Older Children:** *The Rumor* by Anushka Ravishankar; *The Blind Men and the Elephant* by Karen Backstein

**Extension Activity:** Ask children to think about a cat or dog they've met and what they remember about the experience. Have them draw pictures of the animal and compare how different pictures emphasize different characteristics. Read *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel.

### THEME: Don't Believe Everything You Hear

Start storytime with an announcement, "Everyone, the sky is falling! Oh, no! What should we do?" Brainstorm ideas with attendees and ask the kids if they believe you. Why or why not?

**Read:** *Chicken Little* by Rebecca Emberley; *The Wall in the Middle of the Book* by Jon Agee

**Alternate Titles:** *Monkey: A Trickster Tale from India* by Gerald McDermott; *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* by Mo Willems (ask children if their parents would really let the pigeon drive the bus)

**Books for Older Children:** *The Chinese Emperor's New Clothes* by Ying Compestine; *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens; *Anansi and the Talking Melon* by Eric Kimmel; *Love and Roast Chicken: A Trickster Tale from the Andes Mountains* by Barbara Knutson

**Extension Activity:** Select volunteers and act out "See for Yourself" (from *Multicultural Stories to Tell Young Children* by Judy Sierra and Robert Kaminski)