Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

Volume 16 Number 4 Winter 2018 ISSN 1542-9806

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Credit: Marianne Ryczek

Editor's Note
CSK Awards Celebrate Fifty Years

By Sharon Verbeten

The world was a very different place in 1969 when the Coretta Scott King Award was instituted to honor African-American authors. Dr. Martin Luther King had recently been assassinated. And there was no organized group to advocate for We Need Diverse Books.

But, thankfully, several librarians and a book publisher came together to establish the CSK Award, which will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2019.

The awards and honors have gone to some of the authors and illustrators who have gone on to be icons in the world of children's lit—Kwame Alexander, Kadir Nelson, Jacqueline Woodson, Andrea Davis Pinkney, Christopher Paul Curtis, and many more notables.

Not only does this award ensure their names will be remembered and revered—it serves to remind us, and society as a whole, that these authors are not only great authors and illustrators of color, writing about their unique experiences—but that they are great authors. Period.

In a world where, unfortunately, color still exists as a barrier, it's important and soul-affirming that we celebrate fifty years of this award—ensuring future generations realize its legacy, its authors, and the fine legacy they leave behind for generations.

For more information on the upcoming celebrations at the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC, visit http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards/csk50. &

CSK: 50 Years Strong

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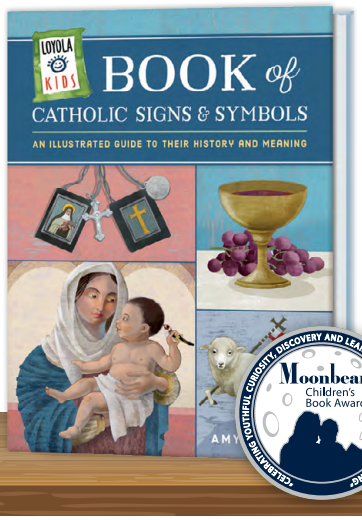

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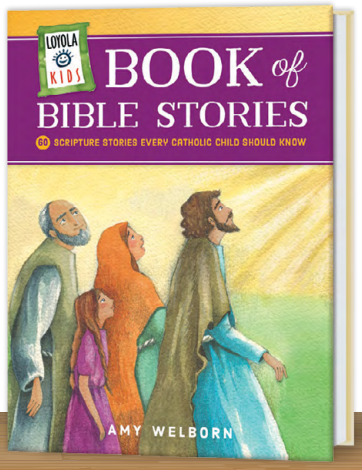

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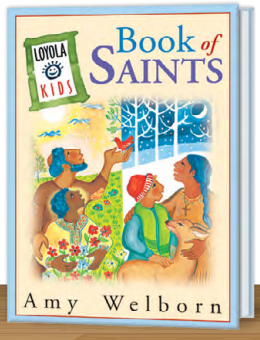

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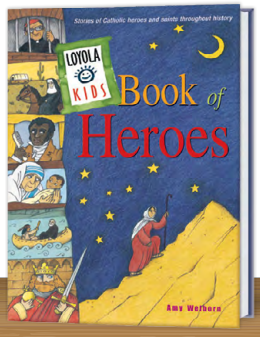

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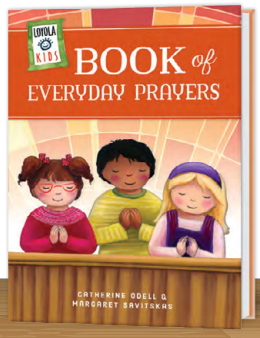

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PEER-REVIEWED

Unpacking the Engineering Process

Resourcing Trade Books and Biographies

JULIE JACKSON, MICHELLE FORSYTHE, DANIELLE MEDEIROS, JOSEPH PARTHEMORE, AND ALEXIS RIX

Interest in engineering education is growing, and libraries are often the hub of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning activities in schools and communities. To enhance patrons' experiences, many libraries have incorporated making, maker, and tinkering spaces that support STEM learning and engineering thinking. Making, maker, and tinkering spaces generally include opportunities for patrons to have hands-on experiences with a variety of materials, technology resources, and design challenges that encourage thinking like an engineer. This type of thinking is "goal-oriented thinking that addresses problems and decisions within given constraints by drawing on available resources, both material resources and human capital."[1] Thinking like an engineer, making, and tinkering are all part of engineering design-based learning.

The focus on engineering design-based learning began with the release of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in 2013, when the NGSS introduced "engineering design as an essential element of science education."[2] In the ensuing years, there has been an explosion of efforts by educators to include engineering design in educational experiences and an increase in the popularity of STEM education.[3] The *Framework for K–12 Science Education* defines *engineering* as "any engagement in a systematic practice of design to achieve solutions to particular human problems,"[4] and it notes that engineers use the engineering design process (EDP) and their problem-solving skills to improve the human condition. The framework cautions that "engineering is not just applied science . . . and engineering design has a different purpose and product than scientific inquiry."[5] "Engineers constantly discover how to improve lives by creating bold new solutions that connect science to life in unexpected ways,"[6] and scientists study the natural world seeking evidence-based explanations.





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The engineering community is working to ensure that STEM education and informal STEM experiences accurately portray the impact of engineering on our daily lives, the nature of what engineers do, and the role engineers play in the creation or improvement of technologies. They emphasize that engineering and engineers can make a difference in the world through the spirit of innovation and bold new solutions. To help the public and students better understand engineering through this lens, the engineering community proposes that "stories that dramatize the rich legacy of engineering achievements" be used to help "bring the experience of engineering to life."[7]

To build student understanding of the nature of what engineers do and how engineers apply the EDP to systematically and efficiently solve problems, we use biographies and trade books to study the accomplishments of engineers and inventors. First, students or library patrons read a biography about an engineer or an inventor, or they may read a trade book that contains an obvious problem and a thoughtful solution. Then they analyze aspects of the text such as text features or plot elements to pinpoint problem-solving as it aligns with the EDP. Students formalize their understanding of the EDP when they create a presentation, a project, or an artifact that includes a summary of the problem that the engineer, inventor, or main character faced and how they used each step of the EDP to solve the problem. Hill-Cunningham, Mott, and Hunt propose that the use of children's literature provides a "real life" application for the EDP.[8]

Using books to support instruction is a time-honored tradition. A well-chosen book can generate interest in a topic, present a problem, challenge misconceptions, and explain content. Although choosing appropriate biographies and trade books that support the EDP can be a challenge, the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) reviews hundreds of books yearly and publishes their recommendations as the Best STEM Books K–12 list, which can be found at www.nsta.org/publications/stembooks/. In addition, the NSTA journal *Science and Children* includes a Teaching Through Trade Books column that recommends two STEM books per issue.

The Engineering is Elementary (EiE) program from the Museum of Science in Boston includes web-based content area support materials that highlight children's literature connections for the engineering topics included in their curriculum.[9] These reliable resources are a great place to find trade books that support engineering design and engineering thinking.[10]

The EDP is an iterative series of steps that guide engineers as they seek solutions to problems. There are several accepted versions of the EDP, and all of them include a continuous cycle "that enables engineers to continually enhance and improve their design [prototypes] through repeated testing, analysis, and redesign."[11] The redesign phase is important. This is where engineers and inventors make improvements to their prototype based on what they learn when a prototype fails or performs in unexpected ways.

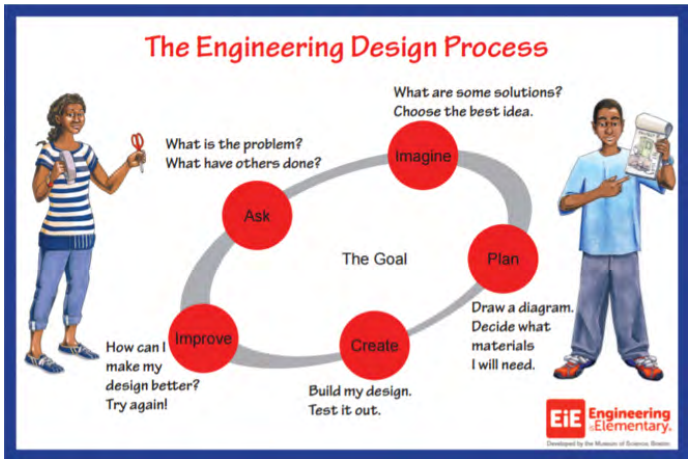

Figure 1. Engineering is Elementary Engineering Design Process.

The Museum of Science, Boston, EiE program incorporates an easy to understand model of the EDP (see figure 1). The EiE EDP model includes a goal and five steps: Ask, Imagine, Plan, Create & Test, and Improve.[12] This is the model we use with our students. Because the EDP is a cycle, it may be entered at any point. Sometimes failure of a prototype leads inventors or engineers to ask questions and brainstorm possible redesigns. Other times the goal is to improve an existing technology to enhance function or expand application.

By using well-chosen trade books and biographies, students can discover or reverse-engineer the EDP past inventors have used. We use picture-book biographies and trade books with lower elementary students and chapter book biographies with upper elementary students. Biographies of engineers and inventors are good vehicles to illustrate the EDP because they "provide a linear, chronological sequence of events with a framework that assists readers in developing their understanding about the person-of-study and that individual's achievements."[13]

Librarians can direct classroom teachers seeking STEM or engineering support to use picture-book biographies, chapter book biographies, and trade books to illustrate how engineers and inventors apply the EDP to address problems and develop workable solutions or improve technology. Table 1 includes examples of picture-book biographies that contain clear examples of the EDP. *Manfish: A Story of Jacques Cousteau* by Jennifer Berne and Éric Puybaret introduces Jacques Cousteau and explains how his love for underwater adventure began. It describes several of the tools he invented or improved in order to study and photograph marine environments. *Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions* by Chris Barton and Don Tate includes a humorous retelling of a failed design test that underpinned Lonnie Johnson's Super Soaker water gun invention. *Balloons over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade* by Melissa Sweet reveals that many years ago, Macy's annual

Table 1. Picture-book biography EDP examples

	Ask	Imagine	Plan	Create & Test	Improve
Manfish: A Story of Jacques Cousteau	Jacques Cousteau was fascinated by movies, and he wondered how cameras worked.	He saved his allowance so he could buy a camera. He dreamed of making movies.	He bought a camera and took it apart and then reassembled it. He planned to use the camera to make lots of movies.	He made home movies of his family. Then he joined the French Navy and he filmed what he saw when he traveled.	Jacques created a waterproof case for his camera so he could make movies about what he saw when he swam underwater.
Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions	Lonnie wondered if refrigerators could use water and air pressure to keep food cool.	He attached a pump and water hose to a water faucet. When he turned it on, water blasted out of the nozzle. He thought, "This would make this a great water gun."	He gathered materials that he could use to build a safe, child-friendly water gun.	He built a prototype water gun and tested it out at a picnic. It worked!	He improved the prototype. He worked hard to find a toy company that would manufacture it. The Super Soaker is one of the most popular toys sold today.

Table 2. Chapter book biography EDP examples

	Ask	Imagine	Plan	Create & Test	Improve
Frozen in Time: Clarence Birdseye's Outrageous Idea about Frozen Food	Clarence Birdseye wondered how he could preserve food so his family could have good-tasting food during the winter.	Mr. Birdseye noticed that freshly-caught fish froze immediately when exposed to the freezing air in Canada. He decided to create a machine that could freeze food as quickly as possible.	Using available information and results from his own investigations, he patented an indirect, quick freezing and product packaging processes that could freeze food fast at very low temperatures.	He built a multiplate freezing machine that eliminated air in the packaging process. He used an ammonia-based refrigerant. Consumers were slow to trust frozen food.	He switched to a metal belt system and began using a calcium chloride spray to cool the belts. He also started dipping vegetables in boiling water before freezing to improve the color.
Who Were the Wright Brothers?	The Wright brothers asked themselves, "How can we build a successful flying machine?"	The brothers read about ballooning, gliding, and existing flying machines. They wrote to people all over the world who shared their dream of flying.	They learned from their previous attempts. They also watched birds fly and noticed how birds twisted the tips of their wings for balance.	They built a large biplane kite. They built over 1000 gliders. In 1903, they built their first flying machine that could carry a person; it broke on the first try.	On December 17, 1903, their power-driven, heavier-than-air machine took flight. They had built the first successful flying machine.

parade included live lions and bears that roared and scared small children. The parade committee decided to replace the live animals with something that would not terrify children, and after several tests and redesigns, the famous Macy's parade balloon puppets were created.

Table 2 includes examples of chapter book biographies that showcase how the EDP is woven into descriptions of engineers' or inventors' achievements. The book *Frozen in Time: Clarence Birdseye's Outrageous Idea about Frozen Food* by Mark Kurlansky describes Birdseye's efforts to find a way to freeze food quickly so it could be stored and then eaten out-of-season. *Who Were the Wright Brothers?* by James Buckley Jr. outlines how Orville and Wilbur Wright successfully leveraged what they knew about bicycles and how birds flew to design and test the first successful flying machine.

Table 3 highlights how the EDP is present in trade books that include a problem or task, a review of a plan of action, the creation and testing of a prototype, and a reasonable, workable solution. *Rosie Revere, Engineer* by Andrea Beaty introduces Rosie and her efforts to create a flying "gizmo" for her aunt. *Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay* by Susan Hood recounts the true story of a father's efforts to use recycled material found in a landfill to create musical instruments for a youth orchestra. *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires delightfully illustrates the frustration and angst that can occur during the create, test, and redesign phases of the EDP.

Once students and librarians are familiar with the stages of the EDP, librarians can reinforce engineering thinking during a read-aloud by placing blank EDP templates in their making and tinkering spaces. During a read-aloud, librarians can request that students track and report the distinct stages of the EDP that occur during the story. Students can create response sticks labeled with each EDP stage (see figure 2).

Then, during the read-aloud, students raise the corresponding response stick whenever they notice a particular EDP stage in action (see figure 3).

If students are not familiar with the EDP or if they require scaffolding, librarians can place a Google EDP and biography HyperDoc on the library webpage. Google HyperDocs are tools or lessons created to frame students' use of technology

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Table 3. Trade book EDP examples

	Ask	Imagine	Plan	Create & Test	Improve
Rosie Revere, Engineer	Rosie wondered if she could build a gizmo to help her aunt achieve her dream of flying.	Rosie stayed awake all night trying to imagine how she could create a flying gizmo for her aunt.	She thought about everything she had ever invented, and she had a plan by morning.	Rosie created and tested a cheese-copter. It flew a few minutes then crashed.	Rosie and her aunt made design changes to improve the cheese-copter.
Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay	Ada needed her own violin so she could practice at home. Her father wondered how he could make a violin.	He remembered learning about a band that made their own instruments.	He asked a carpenter to help him make musical instruments out of trash. They searched the local landfill to find objects they could use to make musical instruments.	They experimented with different items they found in the landfill, looking for material and objects that they could use to make musical instruments.	They transformed oil drums into cellos, water pipes into flutes, packing crates into guitars, and an old paint can, baking tray, fork, and pieces of wood into a violin.

Figure 2. Students creating response sticks to identify the EDP stages

Figure 3. Students using response sticks to identify the EDP stages

to connect and collaborate with other students, construct knowledge, and think critically.

HyperDocs often include scaffolding hyperlinks that direct students to easy-to-use websites and web tools that provide support and helpful explanations. The EDP framing the biography HyperDoc included here was modified by an elementary STEM academy. The revised EDP includes imagine, plan, design, improve, and communicate steps and each step is hyperlinked to the Design Squad Nation website.[14] The Design Squad website contains links to easy-to-understand written descriptions and video examples of each step of the EDP. The HyperDoc also includes space for students to identify how the person-of-study or main character of a trade book used the EDP to solve a problem and create a workable solution to make life better for people. The interactive engineers/inventor biography Google HyperDoc is available at https://goo.gl/EYuZvp.

Using information included in the biography chapter book *The Inventions of Alexander Graham Bell: The Telephone* by Holly Cefrey, a pair of fifth grade students reverse engineered Bell's EDP and entered their ideas in the biography HyperDoc.

The students noted that Alexander Graham Bell identified a problem—slow communication methods that relied on ships or horse carriages. He imagined a faster way to communicate using existing material. He built prototypes and tested and improved them until he had a working telephone. Then he communicated his findings to the world. Completed EDP projects may be displayed in the library maker space, posted on the library webpage, or in another appropriate location.

As an extension, students could engineer an improvement of the innovation studied in order to create their own prototype. Then students would become not only STEM analyzers but engineers themselves.

Libraries regularly provide patrons with making and tinkering spaces that support STEM education. We believe that libraries can also support engineering design-based learning and engineering thinking by harnessing the power of biographies and trade books that accurately portray the impact of engineering on our daily lives, the nature of what engineers do, and the role engineers play in the creation and improvement of technologies. Biographies about engineers and inventors, as well as trade books with identifiable problems that create and test prototypes and portray workable solutions,

continued on page 33

A Place to Play

An Assessment of a Public Library's Play Centers

STEPHANIE SMALLWOOD AND JEANNINE BIRKENFELD

Play is vital for early learning. It is not 'recess' or a 'time-out' from learning, rather it IS the way young children learn."[1] Because play is the foundation of early learning, the Springfield-Greene County (MO) Library District (SGCL) installed Racing to Read Play & Learn Centers with toys and accompanying activities in their children's departments at all ten branches seven years ago. These centers have been well received, but SGCL staff wanted to determine the value to families in the community and the level of kindergarten readiness provided by the centers. A formal evaluation would help library staff learn how families used the centers, how they could be improved, and opportunities for center growth and development.

Located in southwest Missouri, Greene County is home to just under 290,000 residents.[2] The cost of living is low, but wages are low as well, which means this community depends on its public resources for increased quality of life. The Springfield-Greene County Library District includes ten branches as well as a mobile library. It is a progressive library system that actively collaborates with preschools, day cares, community organizations, and schools to support the healthy development of young minds.

Early literacy informs all aspects of library service to young children, but some of the most dynamic components of SGCL's services are the Racing to Read Play & Learn Centers. Located throughout the SGCL's service area, the centers provide an opportunity for all children and families to enjoy playing together with quality materials that develop early literacy skills. Each center is stocked with carefully chosen toys, puppets, and books curated by youth services staff to encourage family engagement, open-ended play, and quality language experiences.

Center items and activities are rotated on a regular basis among branches to provide fresh play opportunities. Tip sheets that include ideas for engagement and play accompany the center items to showcase the variety of ways children might choose to play with them and the skills they are building while doing so. These skills are critical to literacy, social-emotional development, school readiness, and lifelong learning, and they naturally flourish during children's play. The Racing to Read Play & Learn Centers offer a safe, clean, high-quality play space for all children in the community.

In the fall of 2017, a dedicated team of youth services staff made plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the Racing to Read

***Stephanie Smallwood**, MLIS, is the Early Literacy Specialist for the Springfield-Greene County Library District in Springfield, Missouri. A former early childhood teacher, she has worked with young children and families for fifteen years. She is currently serving on ALSC's Early Childhood Programs and Services Committee. **Jeannine Birkenfeld** is the Youth Services Manager of the Schweitzer Brentwood Branch, a city branch of the Springfield-Greene County Library District. She serves on the evaluation team responsible for assessing early literacy programming and resources within SGCL's ten branches.*

An example of a library's early literacy play center.

Play & Learn Centers. The team knew anecdotally that families enjoyed the centers and felt they were valuable. However, we needed concrete data to validate the benefits and guide future planning for additions and revitalization. After reaching out to libraries across the country and finding that none had evaluated their play spaces, we created a unique survey to measure exactly what the team wanted to know.

Survey and Method of Data Collection

This survey presented several challenges. Since we found no models, we designed our own survey from scratch. The team focused on learning the ages of those who use the centers, how often families play, whether families noticed and used the play prompts (the tip sheets for play posted near the materials), what values the centers provided, and if the centers had shortcomings. We kept the survey to a single page. Administration of the survey was another challenge. Previously, the team had successfully conducted surveys evaluating storytimes. Since storytimes are at scheduled times, the team could be present at each one throughout a month to administer the survey. But the Play & Learn Centers are available all hours a branch is open, and families visit them at different times and on different days. The team determined the most effective way to get a variety of random responses was to make youth staff at the branches responsible for administering the surveys when families played at the centers. The team worked closely with youth staff to give them a language framework (see table 1) as well as answers to potential questions when approaching families.

Table 1. Language Framework for Staff

The Library is doing an evaluation of our Racing to Read Play & Learn Centers, and we would like to know how they impact you and your children. Please help us by filling out this short survey. It should take less than five minutes and will be anonymous. If you need any assistance filling it out, I am happy to help. When you are finished, please drop it in the box. Thank you for helping us make our Play & Learn Centers even better!
What are you going to do with this information? This information will help us make decisions about how to improve our Play & Learn Centers. We really want to know how valuable the toys and activities are for you.
I already filled out one of these at a different branch/the other day. Do I need to fill out a second one? No, one survey from your family is plenty. Thank you!
Will this help you buy more/better toys? Some of these look old. Please add that to the comments portion on the survey.

Table 2. Comments from Patrons

(The Play & Learn Centers are) A fun safe place to learn and grow.
During a time when many public spaces are underfunded or not safe, the library is crucial for children's development, especially in lieu of no free public preschool in (the) state.
I think it (the Play & Learn Centers) gives kids opportunities to play a different way than they typically would.
It helps me provide the 'early learning' that I could not provide with my own $.
It provides parents and caregivers opportunities to interact with their children in ways they may not previously have thought of.
My 4 year old can read, I blame you :)
Without the resources the library provides my family would have more stress & less of our basic human needs met.

The survey collection period ran from February 1 through March 31, 2018. Youth staff asked families to complete the survey, and the library's community relations department created signs encouraging families to complete the survey if staff was not present. Responses were anonymous and collected in boxes located near the centers. The paper-and-pencil survey included four rated questions and two open-ended questions. The rated questions asked about the effectiveness of the play prompts that accompany each activity. The open-ended questions encouraged families to share the value they felt the centers provided and offered an opportunity for feedback and concerns. Responses were sent to the district youth services office and entered into SurveyMonkey.

The Data Results

The team received over two hundred responses to the survey. The majority of respondents noticed the play prompts, and 73 percent answered that they found new ideas to play with their children as a result. This supports the centers' goal to guide families in discovering new ways to help their children learn. It also supports the time staff spends creating the prompts. The team also learned that, while the majority of children using the centers are between the ages of two and four,

considerable numbers of infants, toddlers, and older preschoolers also use the centers, as well as some children age seven and older.

The open-ended questions gave the team important feedback supporting the benefit of the centers. Numerous respondents noted their appreciation of having safe, clean spaces to play indoors. Several respondents mentioned accessibility, recognizing that the centers provide an important opportunity for all families. Multiple respondents commented that their children discovered new ways to play and that their families continued this play in their homes. These responses all support the impact the centers have on early literacy development. Table 2 includes a small selection of comments.

We also saw trends in the kinds of improvements respondents suggested for the spaces. Several comments referred to cramped spaces and the difficulty this presents in playing comfortably and managing children. They mentioned the need for safer spaces for infants and concerns that children age seven and older "outgrew" the centers and had limited interactive opportunities. Families also wanted to see more toys, different toys, and worn toys replaced more frequently. While none of these comments was surprising, they support the need to better arrange children's spaces and secure regular funding to replace and update the heavily used toys.

An important goal of administering this evaluation was to use the collected data to determine the next steps and future goals for the Racing to Read Play & Learn Centers across the library district. The centers turned seven years old in May and need updates and replacements. The information in this report supports the need to rearrange and refurbish the current centers to ensure there is adequate room for play and structures to support play activities. The results also tell us that our branches need space for our youngest patrons and that we need to find additional approaches to support learning in playful ways for children ages seven and older. In addition to using this information to improve our children's spaces, the team is sharing the results of this survey with stakeholders, patrons, and relevant community organizations and partners.

The Racing to Read Play & Learn Centers offer joyful play and learning opportunities for our youngest patrons every day. We are pleased to have data and feedback supporting the critical role these centers play in the healthy development of our future community.

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PEER-REVIEWED

A Rainbow of Creativity

Exploring Drag Queen Storytimes and Gender Creative Programming in Public Libraries

JAMIE CAMPBELL NAIDOO

Recently, there has been an increase in public libraries initiating targeted and inclusive programming for rainbow families (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or queer [LGBTQ+] caregivers with children or families with LGBTQ+ children). Specialized training programs have been offered to children's librarians on how to create inclusive services and collections for rainbow families.[1] As a result, many libraries in the United States and Canada have designed children's library programs with LGBTQ+ themes and content, included among these is the drag queen storytime (DQS). A DQS generally includes a drag queen performer reading children's books and sharing songs much like a traditional storytime program. Many of these programs often focus on creativity in general, as well as gender creativity, or include LGBTQ+ children's literature as a way to normalize the experiences of rainbow families. Some public libraries market DQS programs for rainbow families while others promote these programs as an example of general inclusive programming for all families. DQS programs can be successful when used with all kinds of families, and many rainbow families appreciate a librarian's meaningful gestures towards inclusivity.

Since 2016, the number of DQS programs in public libraries has dramatically increased with a mixed reception from children, caregivers, community members, and the library profession. Some patrons are excited to see inclusive programming celebrating LGBTQ+ and gender diversity.[2] At the same time, critics have also identified the lack of quality control in these programs as well as the alleged immoral underpinnings of allowing drag queens to work with children and indoctrinate them with unsavory sociopolitical views.[3]

This article examines several DQS programs in US public libraries to determine considerations when planning and operationalizing these programs. A brief background of the study is followed by a discussion of key findings as well as implications for librarians interested in developing programs inclusive of diverse children and caregivers in rainbow families.

Background and Methodology

In November 2017, an online survey with both closed and open-ended questions was administered to librarians via

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the American Library Association GLBT roundtable and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) listservs to examine DQS program planning strategies as well as the necessary partnerships and collaborations needed with outside organizations. Twelve respondents entirely completed the survey and were comprised of children's and outreach librarians from nine different states—California, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania.

Two-thirds of these librarians served urban communities, with the remaining third divided equally between librarians serving rural and suburban communities. Structured follow-up interviews were conducted via phone with self-selected librarians to further understand the case-by-case nuances influencing community engagement, buy-in, and outreach to local rainbow families in communities served by specific public libraries across the country. Librarians participating in these interviews resided in Massachusetts, New York, and Oregon.

All of the participating librarians were active members of ALSC and eager to share their experiences as a way to assist other librarians in planning inclusive programs that celebrate gender diversity and welcome rainbow families to the public library. Using descriptive statistics and summations of interviews, the subsequent section shares some of the major findings from the structured conversations and online survey. Although only twelve different libraries comprised the sample, the valuable information gleaned from the librarians is highly relevant to any librarian planning a DQS program.

Key Findings

Planning Process, Marketing, and Recruitment

When planning programs for children and their caregivers, librarians often employ a wide range of practices to determine the program format, presenter, content, and activities, and any accompanying print and digital media. Consistent with other types of children's library program planning, the respondents' made the same types of decisions in planning DQS programs. Many of the respondents (58 percent) conducted a formal or informal needs assessment in their communities to determine the need for a DQS programs. Two librarians also conducted informal surveys of LGBTQ+ individuals in the community, and 80 percent of the respondents indicated consulting with LGBTQ+ library staff.

Planning. The actual planning of DQS programs varied from library to library with approximately 20 percent of the librarians planning the DQS program without assistance or input from the LGBTQ+ community and one librarian employing their library system's specific LGBTQ+ committee for the actual program planning. The majority of the respondents (70 percent) indicated that they partnered with a local LGBTQ+ nonprofit to assist with planning and recruitment of drag queen performers. The nature of specific community-based partnerships will be further explored in a subsequent section.

Recruitment. Drag queen recruitment comprised a large portion of the planning for DQS programs. Every librarian indicated the desire to find a drag queen who would be a good fit for a children's program. However, this quest varied significantly across the library systems represented in the survey. One-third of the librarians indicated working with the national Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) organization (www.dragqueenstoryhour.org/), created by author Michelle Tea and San Francisco–based literacy nonprofit RADAR Productions. DQSH screened and supplied the drag queens who performed during the programs. Two other libraries also mentioned distinct partnerships for selecting performers. A librarian in Oregon identified and joined a local LGBTQ+ nonprofit, the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Emerald Empire (ISCEE). After becoming active in the organization, he approached the ISCEE to provide a drag queen for a DQS program. In Illinois, a librarian described how she worked with the local bookstore, which had already been hosting DQS programs, to select performers.

Other librarians detailed their creative efforts to blindly locate performers in the absence of local LGBTQ+ organizations with knowledge about qualified performers. A librarian in Massachusetts reached out to coworkers and friends on Facebook to identify potential performers. From there, she reached out to see if the performer was interested. Two other libraries (one in the Northeast and one on West Coast) attended local drag shows to identify drag queens. Once they found a potential match, they then approached the performer with varying degrees of success. Approximately 25 percent of the respondents chose drag queens from library volunteers who were already working within the library system. Finally, two librarians, one in Ohio and one in California, mentioned that they were approached directly by a drag queen interested in offering a DQS program. As we will discuss later, the diverse methods for recruiting performers have a significant impact on program quality, depending on the level of storytime training offered by library staff.

Marketing. Decisions about marketing the DQS programs varied widely from in-house promotional fliers and Facebook posts to targeted e-mails for rainbow families. While the programs were generally marketed in a consistent manner as other types of children's programs offered in the library system, the intent of the DQS programs often determined the methods of promotion. Half of the respondents billed their DQS program as an inclusive program for all families, and the other half marketed the program specifically to rainbow families or general LGBTQ+ populations. For the librarians that saw the DQS program as a mainstream program, promotional methods mirrored that of other general children's programs, such as advertising in the children's program calendar and posting fliers around the community. In these instances, special promotion was not offered to distinguish the DQS program from other children's programs.

Those librarians perceiving the DQS program as a way to strategically target rainbow families or the queer community often promoted the program in conjunction with other LGBTQ+ or Pride events. A quarter of these libraries also made a concerted effort to notify non–rainbow families about the content and nature of the DQS program to prevent families from mistakenly bringing their children to the program.

These cautionary practices bring up an interesting question related to equity and inclusion. Is it equitable to warn heterosexual families of LGBTQ+ content in children's programs if you do not put similar disclaimers on other types of children's programs? If librarians do not alert families to potential trigger topics in other library storytimes, then they are inadvertently engaging in exclusionary practices at the expense of children and caregivers in rainbow families. Ostensibly, there is a balancing act needed between paving the way for offering a particular type of library program in the community and being equitable in the library's dialog around particular subsets of the population.

Another consideration when marketing a DQS program as being for rainbow families is the potential to marginalize caregivers in rainbow families that do not want to be identified as different or special from heterosexual caregivers. Ultimately, a DQS program might be too "out and proud" for some rainbow families. As such, it is critical that librarians understand their local populations when planning and marketing programs to ensure they are developing a DQS program that the community will embrace.

Community Engagements and Partnerships

Almost all (70 percent) of the librarians surveyed participated in community collaborations, partnerships, or engagement activities with LGBTQ+ organizations or nonprofits during the planning and implementation of their DQS programs. In some instances, an outside organization approached the librarian and, in other instances, the librarian either made the initial contact or was already working with the organization on other LGBTQ–related events, such as Pride, a teen book club, etc.

Partnerships and collaborations ranged from advice on program content and performer selection to in-kind donations—such as free marketing to rainbow families and financial support—to full-blown collaborations where the library worked alongside the LGBTQ+ organization to offer cohosted daylong programs for rainbow families and individuals of all ages from the queer community.

Throughout the structured interviews and surveys, librarians reiterated the necessity for community partnerships in the

Training and Selecting Drag Queens

It is extremely important that performers working with children in library programs be adequately trained on how to offer a successful literacy and learning experience that is developmentally appropriate. DQS programs should be of equal quality as other library children's programming.

Librarians are very selective about the performers they choose for summer reading programs and other children's events. The same should hold true for the DQS program. Success of a DQS program is dependent on a well-trained performer who has good rapport with children. If at all possible, it is recommended for librarians to collaborate with LGBTQ+ and other community organizations that have previously conducted DQS programs. These organizations can recommend specific drag queens who would work well for a DQS program. Librarians may also need to work with drag queens to tweak stage names to make them more appropriate for children, removing the adult humor that sometimes finds its way into drag queen names. Outfits may also need to be modified to make them kid-friendly, such as removing excessive cleavage, risqué dress that might show too much when sitting, etc. This can easily be addressed during training sessions.

There is a variety of skills that can be shared with drag queens to improve their performance at a DQS program. Librarians should consider requiring all performers to attend training and commit to offering programs that promote early literacy standards and creative expression.

Rachel Payne from the Brooklyn Public Library also suggests the following outline for training drag queens for DQS programs.

- Introductions (Share and ask for preferred pronouns)
- What is Drag Queen Story Hour? (Those who have led a DQS program before can share their experiences.)
- Setting up your space
- Read-aloud demonstrations (Including how to hold a book)
- Selecting books
- How to make read-alouds interactive

success of DQS programs. One librarian in Upstate New York worked with an LGBTQ+ organization to identify members to attend the DQS program as greeters to help create a welcoming environment for rainbow families after negative publicity about the program suggested a potentially hostile environment. Other librarians relied upon LGBTQ+ organizations or educators to identify drag queens interested in working with children and to develop culturally sensitive activities that would provide positive experiences for gender creative children in rainbow families.

The libraries that did not engage in community partnerships identified this as an impediment to the success of their DQS program. One library staff member noted that while program attendance was acceptable, it did not have the impact she had anticipated nor did it have any rainbow families in attendance. Another librarian commented about the poor storytime presentation abilities of the drag queen in their program, lamenting that a partnership with an organization such as DQSH might have produced stronger candidates.

Drag Queen Training

Librarians and library staff working with children are well versed on read-aloud best practices, literature selection, and developmentally appropriate behaviors and activities for young children. Unfortunately, not everyone is skilled with read-aloud and storytelling abilities and may need assistance in learning the trade. While drag queens are experts at performing for adult audiences, it takes a special set of skills to hold the attention of young children.

Given the diverse recruiting strategies employed by the respondent librarians, the pool of drag queens ranged from local performers to individuals such as Mrs. Kasha Davis, who appeared on the Season 7 of *Rupaul's Drag Race*. Some of the drag queens had never worked with children while others had children in their extended family (grandchildren, nieces, and nephews). Still others had previously conducted DQS or other literacy programs with children or teens. For this reason, providing some sort of training for performers is particularly important given that library programming and outreach become the face of the library to the local community.

Surprisingly, one-third of the library respondents indicated that no training was offered to the drag queens; rather, the drag queens just did what they wanted. Two additional libraries, one in Illinois and one in Oregon, indicated that they tried to offer specialized training to the drag queens but the suggestions were either not well received or were entirely ignored. In one of these instances, the youth services staff interjected throughout the DQS program to keep it engaging for young library patrons.

Of the libraries that did provide training, they taught the drag queens essentially the same skills, though the time commitment on the part of the drag queen varied. One librarian in Pennsylvania mentioned that drag queens attended a special training before the first DQS program. The children's librarian offered this hour-long training as a way to share

Training and Selecting Drag Queens (continued)

- Transition songs and rhymes and stretches
- Read-aloud practice in small groups
- How to deal with a wide age range of kids
- Activities after the storytime program
- Group discussion: How do you structure a program? What has worked? What has not?
- Questions and answers

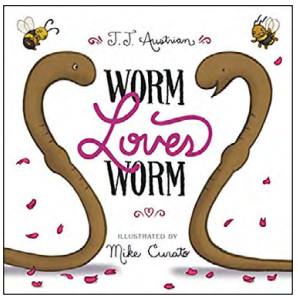
Librarians wanting to implement a DQS program and include a training for their performers could easily adapt these suggestions to ensure that their drag queens are ready to work with young children. Having such a training is also useful when pitching the idea of a DQS program to library administration or defending the program to the library board or larger community.

The national Drag Queen Story Hour organization (www.dragqueenstoryhour.org/organize-your-own-drag-queen-story-hour/) in New York also provides helpful suggestions. They also provide useful information such as what pronoun to use for a drag queen and how to answer children's questions about gender. To gain an inside look of what it's like to be a drag queen performing at a DQS program, check out Alex Falk's post, "Three Queens: Perspectives on Drag Queen Story Hour," on the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom Blog (www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=14809).

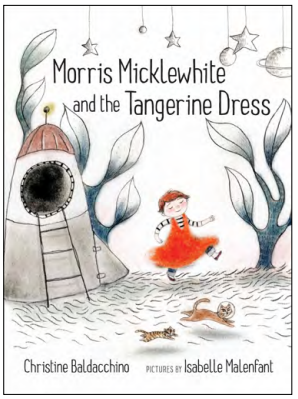
Finally, Sez Me (www.sezme.me/) is another good resource for librarians interested in seeing how an educational children's program with a drag queen might look or to get ideas for working with drag queens and how to teach children about gender. Sez Me originally started as an LGBTQ+ web series for children and has evolved into an educational program for children and caregivers to explore important topics related to creativity, gender, and identity.

best practices and key information about child development, dialogic reading, and the early literacy program Every Child Ready to Read 2. Another librarian mentioned that drag queens were required to observe existing library storytimes to gain tips and ideas for best practices.

Children's librarians from the San Francisco Public Library and Oakland Public Library partnered with the RADAR Productions and Gender Spectrum (www.genderspectrum.org/) nonprofit organizations to offer a day-long training for twenty drag queens. The training included early childhood development information, literature selection guidelines, and book sharing techniques, as well as recommendations for interactive songs, rhymes, and storytime props such as puppets and flannel boards.



A similar training occurred in the New York Public Library system, where library staff met with drag queens from the New York section of DQSH for a two-hour training. According to Early Literacy Coordinator Chelsea Condren, who believes training is key, the success of their DQS program was highly dependent on this training. While incredibly talented and expressive, the performers needed to learn how to hold a book and the importance of reading the book beforehand. They also required time to practice. Condren noted that one of the other systems in New York did not offer training, and as a result, the DQS program was not as well received. She believed the training also helped to weed out potential drag queen readers who were not suitable.



Rachel Aimee, director of DQSH in New York City, confirmed that their organization has provided additional training for drag queens beyond that provided by public libraries. In October 2017, DQSH provided training, facilitated by the Manhattan Behavioral School, related to working with children on the autism spectrum. This was in preparation for a new DQS program for children with autism and varying abilities, which the organization is piloting with the New York Public Library. Drag queens have also received training on how to talk with children about gender and drag-related topics from a social worker who specializes in children's gender and sexuality.

Programs

DQS programs offered by library staff completing the survey or participating in structured interviews encompassed a diverse range of activities and were organized quite differently. Some were offered as part of larger LGBTQ+ events, others comprised a portion of a storytime series, and still others were stand-alone events.

A librarian in San Francisco described including a DQS program as part of events for an inclusive music festival aimed at all families. The New York Public Library includes DQS programs in their paid vendor programming catalog offered to branches throughout the system for all types of families, while several of the other librarians responding to the survey indicated that their DQS program was a one-off attempt at outreach to rainbow families.

Nearly all of the librarians (92 percent) indicated that the intent of their DQS programs were to provide mirrors for children in rainbow families to see their experiences reflected in a mainstream event such as a library program. The libraries found the opportunity for the DQS programs to provide a safe space to explore gender creativity specifically and diversity in general equally compelling. Multiple libraries offering DQS programs indicated that drag queens would show a picture of themselves as a child. The intent was to help children make a more concrete connection between the storytime performer and themselves.

This was also reinforced in the type of materials selected for the program. More than 75 percent of respondents identified the use of children's books with gender diverse or gender nonconforming characters, such as those in *Worm Loves Worm* by J. J. Austrian and Mike Curato or *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino and Isabell Malenfant. Similarly, 80 percent of the librarians included books about not fitting in, such as Todd Parr's *It's Okay to be Different* or Andrea Loney and Carmen Saldaña's *BunnyBear*. A few libraries (15 percent) selected specific books about transgender children, such as Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings' autobiographical picture book *I am Jazz*.

The theme of many of the storytime programs (80 percent) was celebrating individuality and creativity. In many of these programs, a children's story about individuality was shared, children sang a few songs, and then a craft was offered, where children were encouraged to design a costume that they wanted and not one defined by binary genders.

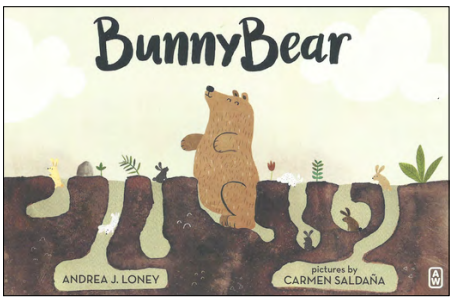
One library in Upstate New York received a grant from a local library resource council to host a storytime series celebrating diversity. Their United Stories of America series introduced storytime attendees to all types of diverse families with one event being a DQS program to celebrate LGBTQ+ culture. All storytime programs included a sign language interpreter, and they used light-hearted stories throughout the series to provide the subtle message "It's OK to be who you are."

Community Reception

Most (75 percent) of the DQS events were well received by the families in attendance, and very few programs received considerable outspoken criticism. In most instances, the library was applauded for its inclusivity and cultural sensitivity to the LGBTQ+ community. Caregivers and children alike felt like they were given a safe space to explore gender and creativity.

However some notable negative responses were discernable. One library in New York received considerable community backlash before the DQS program. Librarians promoted the DQS program via various types of media, including a television interview and multiple radio messages. One conservative radio host propagated misinformation that the library was hosting a transgender seminar for preschoolers. His comments stirred ire in the community, fueling the stereotypes that gay men are likely to be pedophiles. Community members thought that the librarians were talking about sex and sexuality with children. Eventually, the library director called the radio host to set the record straight. This particular library created a handout for staff about the DQS program with the intent to dispel any misconceptions about the program and changed the title "drag queen" to "female illusionist" in marketing materials to assuage concerns of a library board member.

Another library close to Provincetown, Massachusetts, noted that the DQS program was well received by attendees—one patron even joked that he brought his three-month-old grand niece to her first drag show. Unfortunately, the coverage of the program by local press was awkward with the potential for hostility. The library hired local actor-playwright Ryan Landry, who often writes comical and risqué pieces, as the performer. *The Provincetown Banner*, a local newspaper, commented on the choice of Landry as a performer for a children's program and conjectured he would not be reading his adult material as it would be inappropriate for the children. The library director intimated that this poorly placed comment cast a poor light on the DQS program, making the program about gawking at a drag queen rather than an inclusive event celebrating diversity and creativity.



Finally, a librarian in Georgia felt the need to heighten library security after receiving a Facebook post with an admonishment about corrupting the souls of young children accompanied by a photograph of a man toting a gun. While the DQS program was offered without incident, the librarian was left unnerved by the experience.

Other Services to Rainbow Families

Fewer than half (41 percent) of the libraries responding to the survey offered some type of children's program, such as a rainbow family storytime or pride programming beyond the DQS program. These varied from one-time programs to recurring programs.

In October 2017, the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) offered the Genderful! Exploring Gender Through Art program for children ages six to twelve. The program was cosponsored by the New York–based nonprofit Gender is Over, If You Want It (http://genderisover.com/), a community of gender nonconforming, gender expansive, intersex, transgender, and cisgender individuals with a shared passion to deconstruct the gender binary through art and expression.

Genderful! was the brainchild of Leigh Hurwitz from the BPL, Marie McGweir from Gender is Over, If You Want It, and musician/writer/trans activist Laura Jane Grace. An example of a very successful community engagement project, Genderful! offered a space intentionally created to allow children and their adult caregivers to celebrate gender diversity through crafts, storytelling, music, and open conversation. The event also included a read-aloud of Myles Johnson's children's book *Large Fears* and a resource fair with several LGBTQ–friendly organizations.[4]

BPL also offered a series of workshops throughout 2018 for early childhood educators and children's librarians on the topics of gender identity/expression, bodies/curiosity/touching, and welcoming rainbow families. Megan Madison, a researcher and educator from The City University of New York's Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, led the series. The intent was to encourage educators and librarians serving young children to create more frequent opportunities for children in rainbow families to see their experiences represented.

A librarian in California indicated that the main library in their system hosted trans children's author Alex Gino, while several locations welcomed children's author Laurin Mayeno, who authored the queer-friendly bilingual children's book *One of a Kind Like Me/Único Como Yo*. The librarian also noted that several of the branches frequently use books in storytimes that are inclusive of LGBTQ+ themes or rainbow families.

Implications and Recommendations

The results of the study suggest that some librarians in areas of the United States have been very successful at hosting DQS

programs, while other libraries have been less successful. Much of this success can be attributed to training the drag queens and collaborating with LGBTQ+ and other community organizations, particularly those related to education, the performing arts, and literacy. Buy-in by library administration is also important to the success of DQS programs. At least 50 percent of the survey respondents and all of the librarians participating in the structured interviews mentioned working with library administration or having library administration approval to implement their DQS program. A library in Gilbert, Arizona, offers a clear example of the negative consequences of not having administration support and offering training to drag queens. In the November 2017, the Southeast Regional Library, a branch in the Maricopa County Library System, had their DQS program cancelled by the library director. The director's main two reasons for terminating the program were lack of early literacy training for the drag queen and not following administrative procedures for program approval.[5]

The results of this study indicate that additional training and planning resources should be available for librarians implementing DQS programs. These resources should include training information for drag queens, suggestions for program activities and materials, and tips for outreach and community collaborations with LGBTQ+ and other community organizations.

Program Plans & Material Selection

Program Plans. When planning a DQS program, it is important to know your local community and understand its needs. Part of this is being aware that planning a DQS program will invariably raise the ire of some individuals in the community. One only needs to conduct a brief Internet search of DQS programs to see an array of negative commentary. As part of the program planning process, librarians should decide in advance how to respond to these sentiments. Be very clear about the goal and intent of the DQS program and seek input from local LGBTQ+ community organizations as well as other librarians who have experience dealing with undesirable press in relation to the queer community. A particularly useful resource for librarians is the blog post "Defend Pride at Your Library" published by the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=14620), which offers suggestions for both planning DQS programs and responding to public disapproval. Elizabeth Moreau Nicolai from the Anchorage Public Library provides another especially helpful and relevant resource for program planning as well as how to deal with unexpected intruders in her blog post "Drag Queen Storytime—awesome and a protestor" (https://lizintheli brary.com/2018/06/14/drag-queen-storytime-awesome-a -protestor/).

All children's programming should be inclusive. If a children's program does not have an LGBTQ+ focus, librarians can still provide welcoming spaces for rainbow families. Similarly, if a DQS program is targeted towards rainbow families or offered in conjunction with gay history month or Pride activities, then librarians will want to ensure that all families are included in marketing strategies and welcomed to attend. Every community is different and it is up to each librarian to determine how best to plan and market a DQS program in their community.

DQS programs do not always have to include themes related to gender or queer topics. As suggested by one of the interviewed librarians in Massachusetts, simply providing opportunities for children to interact with someone who is different from them can be accomplished without focusing on topics such as gender creativity and nonconformity or LGBTQ+ themes. Certainly some DQS programs can and should address creativity in gender expression, but this need not be a requirement for all of them.

Program plans should take into consideration children's developmental abilities and include the same level of rich, high-quality materials found in other types of children's programming. If a librarian is not a member of the LGBTQ+ community, they should seek input from someone who is, such as by talking with LGBTQ+ library staff or caregivers in rainbow families, collaborating with local LGBTQ+ community organizations or nonprofits, or creating and working with an LGBTQ+ specific or general diversity advisory committee with cross-sectional representation. By seeking this input, librarians can avoid inadvertently stereotyping or perpetuating microaggressions towards LGBTQ+ individuals.

Material Selection. The print and digital materials selected for the program are extremely important. Librarians want to create a program that is engaging, educational, and supportive of young children's sensibilities. Presently there is a dearth of high-quality, read-aloud queer books for young children.[6] This sentiment is also echoed by New York Public librarian Chelsea Condren who notes,

> There is a gap in good LGBTQ picturebooks. Some are not as fun to read aloud as we want them to be. That is why I supplement with new classic storytime favorites. *Worm Loves Worm* works out as a read-aloud, but other books don't always work well. Todd Parr books work pretty well but they aren't solely LGBTQ focused. *And Tango Makes Three* (by Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell, and Henry Cole) is simply too long and wordy. *A is for Activist* (by Innosanto Nagara) doesn't read super well aloud. *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* works well as does *King and King* (by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland); but there is still a huge gap. We strive to include these books, but there needs to be attention to the best strategies for read aloud. We need books that work for storytime. Current LGBTQ children's books are too "afterschool special." We aren't connecting the dots between topical coverage and aspects of a good read aloud. It is much more work for the reader when you use the current titles available. People assume we have more LGBTQ picturebooks to read-aloud for this age group than we actually do.[7]

Rachel Payne from the BPL echoes a similar sentiment. She notes, "One of the things we have been recommending is only one or two book about difference in gender expression in the program and incorporating fun, sure-fire read-alouds as the other books. The reason for this is that some of the books about diverse gender expression can be long and we have an audience of very young children at these programs."[8] BPL provides a list of recommended picture-books for DQS programs on their website (https://borrow.bklynlibrary.org/booklist/vjXMD) that librarians will find useful for planning.

A few other resources are available to assist librarians, including book awards and booklists for LGBTQ+ children's books as well as collection development tools. Awards such as the American Library Association's (ALA) Stonewall Book Award and Mike Morgan and Larry Romans Children's and Young Adult Literature Award administered by the ALA GLBT Round Table, can be useful for finding an LGBTQ+ children's title, though many of the books do not lend themselves to being read aloud. The Amelia Bloomer Booklist (https://ameliabloomer.wordpress.com/), selected by a committee of the ALA Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table, recommends books with gender nonconforming female characters. Some of these titles can be used for a DQS program as well as titles on the ALA GLBT Round Table's Rainbow Book List (http://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/) of recommended children and young adult titles with LGBTQ+ content.

The collection tool *Rainbow Family Collections* by Jamie Naidoo identifies LGBTQ+ children's picture-book titles that lend themselves for use in storytimes as read-alouds. The international companion to that book will include children's titles published in English since 2012 as well as titles in other languages such as Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish.

Advocacy for Rainbow Families and Community Engagement Strategies

Some librarians may be hesitant to offer a DQS program for fear of community backlash. Nonetheless, it is the responsibility of all libraries to be advocates for their local community. By offering DQS programs, the library can help establish an environment that accepts and celebrates diversity.

A librarian in Oregon mentioned a community survey that was administered to the local LGBTQ+ community. When asked to identify community resources that they used, no one mentioned the public library. As a result, the librarian used this as the impetus for creating a DQS program. Essentially, the librarian wanted to demonstrate that the public library was an advocate for the queer community and a potential partner for programming.

A librarian in New York extolled the benefits of video recording the DQS program as a way to not only archive the library's programs and outreach efforts to the LGBTQ+ community, but also as a way to provide evidence of what really happened during the program. This provides the opportunity to counteract negative sentiments by demonstrating reality versus perception of the event. If other librarians wanted to follow this practice, they should consider recording other types of children's programs beyond the DQS program and ensure they have proper permissions from caregivers for any children captured in the video.

Another librarian in New Orleans (not part of the original study), indicated that her impetus for offering a DQS program was a group of straight mothers who saw a need for the program in their community and encouraged the library to host the event. In this instance, the hugely successful DQS program was billed as an inclusive family event celebrating the creativity and diversity inherent in the library's local community.

When thinking about community engagement strategies to welcome rainbow families, the most successful librarians have worked with LGBTQ+ community or other community organizations that have a common focus on creativity, reading or cultural literacy, and education. These librarians have invested considerable time and effort in developing a mutually beneficial relationship where everyone feels valued and respected. From the librarians interviewed and surveyed, the ones that clearly exhibited this partnership were those that worked with the DQSH organization in California or New York.

In these instances, considerable time was taken to meet with leadership from DQSH to discuss shared interests and goals of creating a DQS program in the library. Training for drag queens strengthened the partnership, leading to well-received programs and, in turn, resulting in additional partnerships for other DQS programs or Pride events for rainbow families and the general public.

Getting rainbow families invested in program planning is equally beneficial to community engagement. Those libraries that included either caregivers in rainbow families or members of the LGBTQ+ community who had worked with children, reported greater success in their programs than those libraries who did not work with the LGBTQ+ community. By working with these populations, librarians can gain insight on programming topics and strategies as well as tap into the network of rainbow families to promote both targeted and inclusive children's programming, including DQS programs.

While not indicative of all DQS programs and the experiences of public librarians planning them, this study provides a glimpse into some of the challenges and benefits of planning such programs. The results can be useful to librarians interested in pursuing their own DQS program and can serve as a call for librarians to train the performers they recruit to work with children in programs. It is also critical that libraries planning DQS programs think about the intended audience of the program and discern if the structure of the program

is inclusive to all families or if it unintentionally marginalizes rainbow families by outing them or using materials that perpetuate stereotypes or microaggressions against them. Finally, the power and potential of developing community collaborations with LGBTQ+ and other community organizations is evident within the results and an indicator of DQS program success.

As the number of DQS programs continues to grow, library staff planning these programs and working with the drag queens will inevitably continue to face new challenges and opportunities. Hopefully, in the end, everyone will understand the DQS program is really all about inclusivity, creativity, and imagination. As executive director of RADAR Productions and DQSH notes, "It's really beautiful to have drag queens painting children's faces and telling stories. It's a kid's world to be very imaginative. . . . They're just seeing the drag queens as other people who are being imaginative [too]."[9]

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Sparking the Ire, and Support, of a Community

When a Public Library Program Becomes Something More

Jennifer Stickles, *Head of Youth and Adult Programs and Gallery Exhibits Coordinator at Olean (NY) Public Library.*

> "I am thoroughly disgusted with the thought that children need to learn about abnormal sexual relationships when they can't even decide what clothes to wear or what's for lunch today! Now they can learn how to tuck and tape their genitals, apply makeup, put on a dress and heels, and prance around like a chicken pretending to think that they are the other gender."
>
> "The world is going to hell in a hand basket. What's right is wrong and what is wrong is right. Not in my book. This is not OK. This is the world view; it is not God's view. The Bible calls homosexuality an abomination and that is the truth!"

Those were some of the many negative comments the Olean (NY) Public Library received—via e-mail, phone, on social media, and even in person—when we announced our programming surrounding LGBT+ Pride Month, which included a storytime with drag queens.

The city of Olean, New York (population around 13,000), is located in Cattaraugus County, where 63 percent of votes in the presidential election went to Donald Trump. The area has a strong conservative leaning, and our library received criticism via e-mail, phone calls, in-person complaints, and on our social media accounts.

My role at the library is to oversee and create programs for all ages. As the head of youth and adult programs and an openly queer woman, I took the brunt of the negativity. There were calls for me to be fired, statements about me forcing my "lesbian agenda" on the

Both protesters and supporters rallied outside the Olean Public Library to make their voices heard about drag queen storytimes. Photos courtesy of Danielle Freeman-Brauen.

community, and eventually threats of violence and death. I dealt with a self-professed preacher getting in my face, telling me to burn in Hell, and calling me a demon and a regular patron going on for several minutes about how sick LGBT people were.

Our local newspaper, *The Olean Times Herald*, did an article about the event the day it was to take place. They discussed the criticism and the threats to burn down the library. They also interviewed several people in the community. When the article was published on their Facebook page, it was swamped with comments.

> "And of course what the article fails to mention is that Stickles is, herself, a lesbian and thus has a vested interest in promoting her lifestyle choice as well as the lifestyle choices of other LGBT individuals."

> "Actually it does mention that lower down in the article as to reference its insignificance. It's a crock, they shouldn't allow her around children."

That last comment was made by a regional director of the National Socialist Movement, who resides near Olean and stated he would be attending the drag event to protest.

On June 20, 2018, there was a definite tension in the air when I arrived at work. That evening we would clearly see how our community felt about its LGBT citizens. We had been threatened, and I had received vague death threats on social media. The police were set to arrive later in the day to attempt to keep the atmosphere calm and protect library staff and patrons. There were protests and counter-protests scheduled, and the Buffalo news was on its way to interview individuals on camera.

It wasn't just our local community that was waiting to see how this would all play out. The news of the controversy had spread throughout the country. I had posted about the events leading up to the day in a closed Facebook group for librarians, seeking advice from my peers. People were reaching out to us from all over to let the library know that they stood with us in the face of adversity and censorship.

One woman chimed in, "Thank you for hosting this, OPL. Accepting and learning from people who are different is the fundamental American value. I'll be cheering you from Chicago!"

What had started out as a storytime program that would teach inclusion and acceptance had become a sort of symbol in a way—we were being lauded for standing strong, refusing to back down and cancel the event even with the threat of violence and Neo-Nazis. The library staff and board of trustees were being commended for refusing to participate in censorship.

Our staff wore Celebrate Diversity buttons and worked extra hours to be there during the event, and all members of our board were in attendance. We pulled together and showed a united front against the hate that was coming at us.

It was controlled chaos that day. Police officers in and out of uniform patrolled the library and parking lot. There were camera crews, radio stations, the local newspaper, protesters, counter-protesters, and patrons filing in and out of the library that evening. Our performer, Benjamin Berry, was being interviewed by multiple news outlets all while trying to get into the role and unicorn attire of Flo Leeta.

Approximately an hour before the event, I stepped outside for the first time. The small front lawn of the library was filled to capacity with supporters. There were rain-

bow flags, signs, children laughing, and adults from all walks of life conversing. The scene before me was in a word, beautiful.

There were protesters. The police had made them stay off to the side huddled together with their signs. About ten people had gathered to show their anger versus the two hundred that were there to show their support.

The show was a huge success, and an additional 150 tried to squeeze into the small venue. Flo Leeta's costume resembled a unicorn, and the children adored her. The library staff and board were all smiles as they watched people gather around afterwards to have their picture taken with the drag queen. I went home after we closed—later on the evening news, our event was the headline story.

It didn't end that night though. The days leading up to the event and the overwhelming support by our community that night had only been the start. The next day, the local paper ran the headline "Drag Queen Kids' Party Brings Waves of Support to Olean Library." The library received congratulatory e-mails from the Office of Intellectual Freedom, the American Library Association, and the New York Civil Liberties Union.

Our library was being talked about on the Stonewall Gazette twitter account, ilovelibraries.org, in *American Libraries* magazine, on the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutes Twitter account, and more. The news report went national a couple of days after the event.

The program had exposed a lot about our community, and the supporters ended up outnumbering those who were against the event. The biggest fallout from the event happened at the local school district. Marcie Richmond was the Title IX compliance officer for the Olean Schools. In a public post, Richmond left a comment regarding the drag event that had happened at the Olean Public Library.

"Gender identity issues are directly from Satan...Children should not be exposed to that at such a young age. Satan tried to make it seem like it's just a story reading and 21st century thing that we should embrace and that's so far from the truth..." Marcie Baker Richmond

On June 26th the Olean School Board had a public hearing regarding their code of conduct. The Cattaraugus County Pride Coalition (CCPC) and others attended the meeting, intending to bring up the statements made by Richmond. Community members were concerned that Richmond would not be capable of performing her job duties as the Title IX compliance officer if she held transphobic and homophobic beliefs.

The school board would not allow the community members to speak. The previous year they had enacted a policy stating those wishing to be given time at a school board meeting had to put in a written request no later than the Wednesday before. Understandably the public was upset by the restriction, and so the board agreed to hold a special session the following Monday, July 2nd.

The CCPC and others spent the days leading up to the special session preparing statements to read and a list of changes they wanted to see happen at the school. The group did not ask for Richmond to be disciplined, they instead spoke of proactive changes they wanted to take place at the school:

- All Olean City School District employees should receive safe space training
- Create a diversity committee of students, faculty, and community members
- Create a gay-straight alliance at the middle school

The school board did not comment about the requests or the statements that were made by the public. One thing that did become clear that evening, Marcie Richmond was no longer the Title IX compliance officer for the Olean City School District.*

A drag queen storytime program, threats of violence, Neo-Nazis, and homophobia brought together the LGBT community and allies, gave us national recognition, and started the journey of making our city and schools a safer and more inclusive environment for this marginalized group of individuals.

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Couples Who Collaborate

Andrea Davis Pinkney and Brian Pinkney

JENNIFER GIBSON

For author Andrea Davis Pinkney and her husband, author/illustrator Brian Pinkney, creating books for children is truly a family affair. The couple has collaborated on more than fifty titles, ranging from board books like *Watch Me Dance* (Red Wagon Books, 1997), to their many picture-book collaborations, like *Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride* (Hyperion, 2009) and *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (Little, Brown, 2010), to longer nonfiction titles such as *Hand in Hand: Ten Black Men Who Changed America* (Disney-Hyperion, 2012).

We talked with the couple about their secret to balancing work and family life (Saturday meetings at the diner!), what inspired them at a recent school visit, the progress towards diversity in children's book publishing for our nation's youth, and their many book collaborations. The interview includes a discussion of *Martin Rising: Requiem for a King* (Scholastic, 2018), released on the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., uniquely told through an inviting series of what Andrea calls "docu-poems" and illustrated in a luminescent layering of inks, gouaches, and watercolors by Brian.

Unlike many author/illustrator duos, who are kept apart by the publisher and do not typically collaborate or provide feedback, being married and working on many books together presents a unique situation. To what extent do you collaborate together on projects vs. following the traditional model of illustrator and author working separately?

Andrea: Working with the one you love can definitely have its challenges! But it's the love Brian and I have for each other that makes it all so much fun. Brian's studio is in an entirely different neighborhood from our home in Brooklyn. It's his sacred place for making art. I've only been there twice—once when he was moving in, and another time when he was dropping off art supplies. Even then, I didn't actually go inside. I stayed in the car.

Even though we share everything else—toothpaste, cereal, kids, laundry—we don't share our workspaces. An artist needs to be free to think creatively without a writer's input. Same for us authors. We need to be free to brainstorm and edit without an artist telling us how they think our stories should be written.

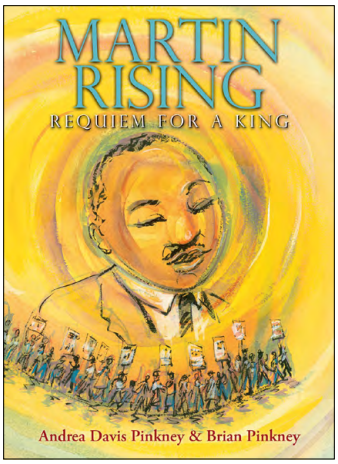
Brian: Andrea and I have a really good system of working together. We meet every Saturday for our "Meeting of Two," as we call it. And it is just that—a very structured meeting. To observers, this way of working seems formal, but it works really great. We get together at our favorite diner in Brooklyn. We meet from 12:30 in the afternoon until about 3:00. Each week we slide into the same booth with stacks of stuff we want to discuss. We each bring what we've been working on during the preceding week. I've read Andrea's manuscripts in progress and have made notes in the margins. Andrea's looked at my sketches and has put Post-it notes all over the pages. She brings that to the meeting. And we spend those precious three hours talking it all through.

*Freelance illustrator **Jennifer Gibson** is the Information and Archives Specialist at Keuka College in Keuka Park, New York.*

Andrea: And there are certain rules for the meeting. Rule number one—no crosstalk allowed. That means we each take turns speaking, like in school. You can't cut the other person off while they're talking. First Brian has a turn, then I have a turn. Rule number two—we always start each comment on a very positive note. For example, when commenting on my writing, Brian must always start by saying, "Honey, you're off to a great start!" I know, it sounds silly, but we all like to be buttered up!

Brian: (Giggles) Yes, it's true. Everybody needs a little boost when getting their work critiqued. Andrea is a really strong art director. She has a very keen eye when looking at my sketches. So one of my rules is that, in the spirit of buttering up your hubby, Andrea's not allowed to say something like, "This guy's foot looks like a football." Instead she's gotta say, "Honey, that area of the sketch looks unresolved." That's marital code-speak for "Honey, you need to redraw this illustration."

Andrea: We also use our meeting time to review anything work related. This includes our appearance calendars, upcoming projects, new book ideas, contracts, anything that has to do with the business of making books. And when the three hours is up, the meeting is *over.* Period. End of story. Another rule—no talking about work outside of the parameters of the Saturday meeting. For example, we can't be brushing our teeth later that evening and start yammering on about something having to do with work. There's a good reason for this.



We've known each other for more than thirty years, and we love to collaborate. But there's a risk in that. You end up talking about work twenty-four seven because we're so passionate about it. That's why the Saturday meetings are so important. They create a boundary. They help us maintain a sane work-family balance. In my purse, I keep a notebook with my "B.P. Saturday List." These are notes to myself about things I want to mention to Brian in our meetings.

Brian: Yes, that's quite a list sometimes! But I love how organized my wife can be. We often joke that to stay happily married, we need to embrace the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That is, to practice peace and nonviolence.

Growing up, who influenced you the most to pursue creative careers?

Brian: Definitely my dad. He's illustrated more than one hundred books. He's won five Caldecott Honors, and the Caldecott Medal for *The Lion and the Mouse.* But it's not the prizes that inspire me—it's who my dad is inside and how he looks at the world through such a creative lens. When I was growing up, I wanted to be just like him. He's shown me, through his example, that you can be a father and an artist. And you can love both of those jobs. My mother, Gloria Jean, got me my first artist's studio when I was ten years old. It was a walk-in closet that she'd converted to foster my little kid creativity. Now that I have kids of my own, I see how important it is to nurture their passions.

Andrea: I grew up in a family of book-loving, storytelling people. My mom was a middle school English teacher. She read constantly. Books were like food, air, water, and sunshine to her, and she was always pushing books on me. When I was a kid, I read what Mom read, which was adult fiction—books by Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. This had a big influence on me.

Dad was a remarkable storyteller. Whenever we gathered at the Davis dinner table, we told stories. They were always about the odd, happy, memorable things that happened that day. Finding a parking space. Standing in line at the supermarket. Having a chance meeting with a friend. When sharing about his day, Dad was very good at creating a narrative that had a beginning, a middle, and an end. He crafted characters (the lady at the cash register, the bank teller), and we often came away laughing. That's how storytelling started for me.

Does being part of such an iconic children's literature family add to the pressure or a sense of responsibility?

Both: We feel very blessed to have the family that we have. It's something that we don't take for granted. It's a gift, and we're just very happy about it. We love, as a family, to talk about the books that we're creating.

Brian: My dad, Jerry, illustrates beautiful depictions of African-American life and history through watercolors, as do I, but we approach them in very different ways. My mom, Gloria Jean, is an author. My brother, Myles Pinkney, is a photographer and children's book creator along with his wife, Sandra Pinkney, who writes traditional, nonfiction children's books. So it's all in the family, and we all do something very different. So it's all just a big party. When we have Thanksgiving dinner or Fourth of July outings, we're all just sharing the books that we are creating and ideas and what we're thinking about and what we're working on.

Andrea: I call Brian's mom and dad my "mother-in-love" and my "father-in-love." I consider them my other set of parents, along with my own parents. I also call Jerry "Daddy Lion," paying homage to *The Lion and the Mouse*; it's a fun, creative family to be in.

Andrea, from digging deep into research, to penning what you call "book magic," could you share a bit of how you approach a nonfiction writing project?

Andrea: "Book magic" is the moment when a reader has fallen so deeply into a book that the world goes by—and nothing else

matters but those words and the pictures. They've been swept away by the sheer magic of it all.

As an author, my hope is to invite the reader to an experience. This is especially important when I am creating a nonfiction book. I approach it by thinking, *How can I reach out a hand to the reader? Am I creating a narrative that is going to pull them in, take them on a journey?*

An example being our new book, *Martin Rising,* which is written as a series of "docu-poems" detailing the final days of Dr. Martin Luther King's life before his assassination. But it's not so much the informational, historical aspects, it's really the poetic form that will invite readers into the experience of this nonfiction book.

Tell us about your collaboration for *Hand in Hand: Ten Black Men Who Changed America*, filled with deeply personal stories of black men featured in American history books. We understand it was created at the initial request of your son reacting to media portrayals, who requested, "Mom, write a book about the goodness of black men. Give me nonfiction that's the real deal—and fun for me to read!" After that request, what came next?

Andrea: I ask students, "How many of you like nonfiction?" A small amount of hands go up. I then ask, "Why don't you like it?" They say, "It's boring. I have to read it for school. Nonfiction is like yucky spinach." Those are the kinds of answers I get. And so, I've made it my mission to solve the yucky spinach problem.

I also have a lot of kids telling me, "Mrs. Pinkney, I have to do a book report on an African-American hero for school. I need to go get a book on Jackie Robinson or Thurgood Marshall or Barack Obama." As the mother of an African-American son, it's always been important to me to provide him, and others like him, with books that depict black men in positive and engaging ways.

Brian: Yes, as a black man and a father, and as the son of an African-American father, it's very important to me to beautifully render the men that appear in my books. To depict them in regal ways. The *Hand in Hand* portraits were inspired by African masks. If you really look closely, they're somewhat metaphorical. Really, it's about the spiritual essence of each of those men. You can see the influences.

Brian, you have illustrated in many mediums, from watercolor and gouache to oils and scratchboard, yet all of your paintings possess your unique style. How do you create illustrations and how has your style evolved?

Brian: When I create illustrations based on Andrea's writing, and by other authors, I'm really inspired by the storytelling and the rhythm of it. So that when I'm illustrating someone like Ella Fitzgerald, I'll render her in scratchboard, which is a very sculptural, three-dimensional, labor-intensive art form. It involves a specialized kind of scratchboard called Este, that comes from England. Then I use a scratchboard nib, which is like a sharp tool, and the way it's formulated with a coating of black ink, you can slice into it like butter. When I am scratching, it sounds like drumming, *tch*, *tch*, there is a musicality to it, and that sounds appropriate for a book about Duke Ellington or Ella Fitzgerald.

In the case of *Martin Rising*, that is watercolors, India ink, and gouache. That cover has a very luminescent quality to it. You'll notice that the book has a lot of yellows and golds, because it's really about the transcendence of darkness and Martin's ability to inspire the people who believed in him, on the cover of the book. It is as if Martin is gazing back at the marchers, they're kind of looking up at him, and they're inspiring each other—he's inspiring them with his gaze, they're inspiring him through their unity. And that was a case too where there wasn't just the palette or just the medium, it was the way I approached those paintings. I was inspired by painters like Marc Chagall, a Civil Rights painter named Norman Lewis, and in the case of *Martin Rising*, those paintings are not necessarily meant to illustrate the text, they are meant to convey the kind of metaphorical, emotional, symbolic, spiritual aspects of Martin in his final days and then his ultimate transcendence.

So it really depends on the book, the story, and the medium. I read a manuscript many times, then I sit quietly. I meditate and become inspired to act.

Andrea, in *Martin Rising: Requiem for a King*, tell us about how you selected moments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life to write poems to.

Andrea: The year 2018 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. It seems quite fitting to be writing about it now, because Martin's dream for peace, equality, unity, and brotherhood is needed more than ever. In the book, there are three sections: there's daylight, which chronicles the beginning of Martin's life, we start on his birthday in 1929; then part two is darkness, when we are coming to 1968 and the events leading up to his assassination; and part three is dawn, the transcendence of a new day, Martin is rising, and his message is rising and continues to rise and permeate with this generation now. It comes full circle with Martin Luther King Day, which can be any year, on January fifteenth.

That's how I chose those pivotal events that happened, and you'll see that the book is written chronologically, each of the "docu-poems" is dated so that we know when Martin arrived in Memphis, when he gave his final "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, and when he was assassinated. There are aspects of Martin's humanity which I felt were important to include. There were moments when he felt doubtful. He didn't know if his dream was ever going to become a reality. But he still moved past his doubt. He transcended his own humanity, his own limitations. He moved forward. So much of what Martin believed in is so pertinent today.

Brian, you've also written and illustrated six books; what is your process when the entire book project is your own vision?

Brian: Being an author and an illustrator for the same book is very different because it's a wholly-aligned vision. Most of the books I've written and illustrated are picture-books, and they're for that younger reader. My first book, called *Max Found Two Sticks*, is about a boy who spends his day in his Brooklyn neighborhood, which is where I live, not wanting to say much and using a set of twigs that fall from a tree as his drumsticks, and that's me as a kid. In the book there's a church that's actually in my neighborhood. I was a drummer as a kid, and I'm still a drummer now.

The books that I write usually come from my own childhood experiences. I have a more recent book called *On the Ball*, about a kid playing soccer with different animals, and I was a soccer player growing up. I have a new book coming out called *Puppy Truck*, and it's about a little kid named Carter who really wants a puppy but he gets a toy truck instead. I really wanted a dog as a kid and my parents wouldn't get me one, but I did get a toy truck. So again, a lot of my books are based on my childhood experiences.

Andrea, how did working in publishing inform your writing practice?

Andrea: I'm a book editor as well as an author. I understand authors because I am one. I know what it's like to have writer's block and what it's like to feel great about something you've written. But I also know the struggle of needing more time to finish a manuscript. As an editor, I'm there to hold the flashlight while the author does the digging. My role is to guide the creative process. When I am working nine-to-five as an editor, that's what I'm doing. I'm not in "writer brain." In my early mornings, I get up at four o'clock. That's when I do my writing. As I'm a writer, I can't edit myself. So I am very fortunate to have amazing editors who see what I can't see. Trying to edit your own work is like trying to do dental work on yourself. It's impossible! You need somebody else to help you get in there and see what needs to be fixed. I have tremendous respect for the process.

Having broken down boundaries in publishing, and through writing about black men and women who have broken down barriers, has your perspective changed on what children's books have to offer our diverse young people in 2018?

Andrea: As a team, we're in schools constantly. And if you go into most classrooms in the United States, those classrooms, no matter where we are, have a diverse mix of students. All races, ethnicities, backgrounds, religions, orientations, and we're in a moment now where we have a ripe opportunity to create books for the vast range of children that come from so many different experiences. So it's a hopeful time, but we cannot afford the luxury of cooling off. Now more than ever we really need to keep our eyes on that prize, and we need to not only create books for diverse audiences but create a diversity of titles, across genres, across subject matters, and that's what we've devoted our life's work to doing, and we believe in it strongly.

Anyone who follows your activities on social media can attest that your schedule of events, whether giving back to the community or accepting awards, is not for the faint of heart! Tell us about some recent highlights.

Andrea: We travel quite a bit. We recently had the opportunity to visit a school in Denver. Before we were going to speak to all the students, we were invited to go into a classroom of fourth-graders. The kids received a book donation box of assorted titles, and we sat with students one-on-one and read with them. What was so amazing was that, for these kids, it was as exciting, and as fun, as Christmas morning. They dove into the box, they selected books, and they eyed which books to read. And just seeing how engaged they were, with the love and the joy and the power of reading, we just floated out of there, we were so happy to see that again. In the age of social media, the age of technology, these kids were there, holding books, loving them, and reading them.

Another recent highlight is that we love to read with our own children, who are grown, but having them talk to us about what they're reading and having our daughter and our son recommend books to us that we're all enjoying and talking about, that's a pleasure. &

CSK Award Celebrates 50th Anniversary

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the Coretta Scott King Book Awards. Andrea Davis Pinkney will serve as honorary chair of the CSK anniversary planning committee, along with chair Dr. Claudette S. McLinn, executive director of the Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature (CSMCL) in Inglewood, CA.

Using the hashtag, #CSK50 on social media, you can share your favorite moments from past Coretta Scott King Book Awards breakfasts, Coretta Scott King Book Award titles that you and your library cherish, or what this award means to you as a library worker, educator, reader, or writer.

For more information on plans for the celebration at next year's ALA Annual Conference, visit http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards/csk50.

Sharing Our Stories

The Work of Gary D. Schmidt

MARY-KATE SABLESKI

Sharing a good book with a friend is one of the most fundamental experiences children need as they develop their identities as readers. In our libraries, we create spaces for children to find a great book, read it with support from others, and finally share those stories with their peers.

In my university classes, I create similar structures for my undergraduate students studying children's literature, and I model how to share books most effectively with children. As a class, we read several middle grade novels together, discussing the stories, sharing our interpretations, and brainstorming ways to share this literature with children.

Recently, we engaged in a study of the work of Gary D. Schmidt, and it ignited an interest and a passion in my students for the power his books can hold when shared with middle grade students. Small groups completed an in-depth project on this author's work, and three students reached out to Schmidt to see if he would complete a personal interview. He agreed, much to their delight, and they shared the completed interview in class.

The interview focuses on his book *Okay for Now* (2011). It also addresses his process and inspiration as a writer. I continue to use the interview in my classes as an example of the power of a mentor author to inspire and connect to student readers.

Schmidt is the author of many books for middle grade students, having won a Newbery Honor for *The Wednesday Wars* (2008), a Newbery Honor and a Printz Honor for *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* (2005), and a National Book Award Finalist for *Okay for Now* (2011), among other honors and accolades for his work. His books are funny, engaging, and relatable to middle grade students.

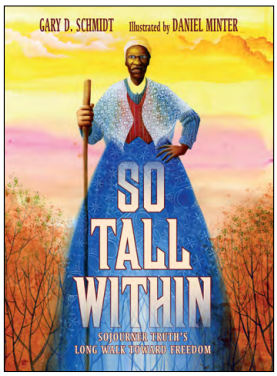
Most recently, Schmidt contributed to a collection of essays, entitled *40 Stories Celebrating 40 Years of Star Wars: From a Certain Point of View* (2017). His most recent novel for middle grade students is *Orbiting Jupiter* (2015). His picture-book biography, *So Tall Within: Sojourner Truth's Long Walk Toward Freedom* (2018), illustrated by Daniel Minter, departs from his work in middle grade novels to creating nonfiction for a younger audience.

Mary-Kate Sableski *is an assistant professor in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton, in Dayton, Ohio. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in children's literature and reading intervention. Her research interests include diversity in children's literature, struggling readers, and professional development. She can be reached at msableski1@udayton.edu.*

One of his most celebrated novels, *Okay for Now,* is the story of Doug Swieteck, a middle schooler struggling to find himself amidst his personal family struggles and the wider context of the world in 1968. The book is funny, heartbreaking, historically grounded, and, most of all, engaging to young readers who are also seeking to navigate their own path in life.

Studying Gary D. Schmidt's work helped my students see how connecting children to even one book in which they can see themselves can introduce a lifelong love of reading. My students learn through reading this interview how books, and deep connections to their authors, can serve as models of empathy and kindness. As the interview demonstrates, Schmidt's work resonates deeply with middle grade children and gives them a lens through which to learn about the world beyond them. *(This interview has been slightly abridged.)*

What was your inspiration for *Okay for Now*?



GS: The book began in the public library of Flint, Michigan. Flint has been called America's most violent city, mostly because the auto industry is gone and so there are no jobs, and when there are no jobs, there is despair and then violence—and we haven't even started on the water crisis there. So, I was in Flint, walking around that library—it's an amazing place—looking at some of their holdings between gigs, and there was this low table that I came upon that had a glass case on top, and inside that, there was a book. A huge, huge book. It was a later edition of John James Audubon's *Birds of America.* If it was a first edition, that is a $14 million book, one of the most expensive books in the world. It wasn't [a first edition], but it was an 1861 edition, so still worth half a million dollars.

So, when you think about it, here's this book sitting in a library in that city with no resources and really, really struggling to stay vital and alive. And yes, half a million dollars is a lot of money. So, I asked the librarians, "Why don't you sell this one?" And they said, "Because someday Flint is going to be back better than ever, and we want this for the new generation."

That is such an awesome statement from a librarian.

GS: I was thinking, wow, that is pretty noble. Then, when I was driving home from the library, there was a report on NPR about a school in Pennsylvania that in the 1930's had received a mural from N.C. Wyeth. This amazing mural was in the auditorium of the junior high and has been there since 1930. They were trying to decide if they should keep this or if they should sell it. It's from one of America's most famous painters, this extraordinary painting that every junior high kid in this town has seen for eighty years. It's an original N.C. Wyeth and there really aren't that many left at all. So, should they sell this painting and get, I don't know, $1.2 million or $1.4 million and endow three teachers who would forever be endowed and not touchable by state budgets? That's pretty attractive. Or should they keep it?

Yes, being able to fund three teachers would be quite a statement from the school.

GS: But losing the painting is pretty awful. They fussed about it and thought about it, and finally they sold the painting; it's now in the hands of a private collector and is completely unavailable to anyone. But they got their three teachers. So, that really is the same story twice, a story about a work of art which one organization keeps and another organization sells. Both making hard decisions, but different decisions.

That was the beginning of *Okay for Now*. Here comes the kid, who comes to a library, who comes upon the most famous book in the world, and they are cutting it up to sell each page one by one—which is how these books get destroyed. He resolves that he wants one thing in his life that is whole and that's it. So, he goes for it: he tries to get all the missing pages back. And of course, he won't get them all back, but he will get some.

That is amazing. What a powerful story. What were the challenges of weaving those two stories together to write this book?

GS: Wow, I've never been asked that before. I suppose the voice had to be just right. He's a beat-up kid and he is hurt and he's in a beat-up situation and he is so angry—with good reason to be angry and bitter. But I wanted to create a book where you didn't get only his angry and cynical voice like an assault, but you want to get that tone across. He's also a kid that is unlikely to be very forthcoming and vulnerable with anyone.

So, to have a first-person narrator who doesn't want to be vulnerable presents a certain problem as well. Then, there are scenes in his life that he is going to tell which are pretty hard. The tattoo scene is a pretty hard scene. I wanted, I think, the voice to get all of that stuff to work, without him sounding oh-so-sweet or without him sounding oh-so-angry, and that was probably the hardest thing. That is why there are all of those pauses where he is about to say something, and then he stops because he just wouldn't. An angry, hurt kid is not going to spill his guts to just anyone.

I would say you've been successful in crafting that voice! Doug is such a complex character.

GS: That is also why the tattoo scene is told somewhat removed from the reader's immediate experience. You hear about it, but you aren't there; you don't really see it because Doug won't express it so overtly. That is why the voice changes toward the end of the novel, where the kid who is so ready to pounce on anyone who questions him or who challenges him

is the one called upon to provide comfort to someone who is really in desperate straits—and he steps up.

So, when you were younger and growing up, what were your favorite books to read, your favorite genre or author?

GS: There was a book called *The Little World of Don Camillo*, that came out right after World War II, set in Italy. It's probably the funniest book, the most poignant and painful book, I've ever read, by a writer named Giovanni Guareschi. It is still popular in Europe, but it has been out of print in America for forty years. It's this extraordinary story about a priest in a small town and his relationship with a Communist mayor. Obviously, they are completely at odds. It's just really a terrific book. I have it on my desk all the time at home, where every day I write. It's right there on my desk.

And the other books that I really, really loved are others that you never would have heard of either. They are from the 1920's, a collection called My Book House. It's a set of six books that later led to a twelve-volume set. That was probably America's first successful door-to-door sale of books. The woman who put together the six volumes, Olive Beaupre, literally went door-to-door to sell them. They were called My Book House because they were marketed, and I'm not making this up, in a little wooden house. The idea was that young readers were to grow up with them, as the material in each volume got harder and older. They were a collection of mostly Western European stories. I loved them. I thought they were fantastic. I loved the Horatio Hornblower books when I got a little older, but they are outdated now, though I still think they are really good.

Growing up, did you enjoy writing or did you ever keep a journal?

GS: I never kept a journal, and I still don't keep a journal. There are some people who love keeping journals. I hated it whenever I tried it. I still hate it, but I just don't do it all. I was not the kid who liked writing growing up. In our school in first grade, they used something called tracking. You were put into one of three tracks by the time we finished first grade. If you were in track one, you were going on to college and getting a great job. If you were in track two, you were probably going to be okay, maybe go on to college and have a good job. If you were in track three, you were the guy that was going to serve French fries at McDonald's the rest of your life. I was put in track three.

We were called the dumb kids, and the dumb kids got the least amount of attention when we really needed the most. By fourth grade I still was not able to read. There was a teacher in fourth grade, Miss Kabakov, who met me on the playground and who just liked me. She came in one day and took my hand and she said, "You need to get all of your stuff, you're coming with me," and I was like "Okay…." I have no idea how it happened, and my parents didn't even know how it happened, but she just took me into her classroom, and she had stuffed this desk with books, most of them way below grade level. She was a track one teacher, and I was a track three student. She taught me to read in whatever breaks there were between other things. She would sit at my desk, and we would read Dr. Seuss and really young readers in fourth grade. So that's why I really don't have memories so much of really early reading, like picture-books and such. I just didn't do any of that. I just sort of started [reading] in fourth grade. For me, books were particularly odd and a dangerous thing. They could make you look like an idiot.

I like what you said about the neediest readers requiring the most attention to help them learn to read. Your books are certainly engaging and relatable to children who have experienced similar struggles. How did you think of a title for *Okay for Now*? What inspired you to come up with that kind of title?

GS: Okay, this is going to be disappointing to you. Are you ready? Most titles, particularly in fiction, most titles are not the author's titles. Of all of my books, I have maybe two or three titles that are actually mine. Most of the time, you send in [an idea], and it doesn't get accepted. An editor comes up with a list and you come up with a list, and you negotiate to try and figure out what the title is going to be. It's a long process. It's more about marketing than it is about aesthetics.

What was the original title?

GS: You know, I knew you were going to ask me that. I don't know, I don't even remember. Well, the *Friday Library* was one title I came up with, but that was just shot down immediately. Also *Doug*, but that turned out to be the title of a PBS cartoon. With titles, what happens is that I send in an idea, then they fly me out to Boston and I go up to the Houghton Mifflin offices and we work it out. For this novel, I went to the editor's office, and when they handed me the contract to sign, the title was *Untitled Manuscript*. I said, "Betsy, it does have a title," and she said, "No, that one really stinks." And we go from there. As I said, it's a really long process of working it out. The latest one is called *What Came from the Stars,* and that's my title, and the one before this was called *Wednesday Wars*, and they made that *The Wednesday Wars* over my objection.

Most of the books are not titled that way. So, *Okay for Now* is something that the editor came up with, and I sort of liked it. It sounds a little bit like a Jacqueline Woodson title, which is fine, but it seemed to fit. It seemed to work well with it, and he uses that phrase early on in the book, so that seemed to just all work pretty well. In the end, the characters are okay for now. I mean, you don't know what happens to Lil—though you will find out in a later book called *Pay Attention, Carter Jones*—and you don't know if the father is going to be on the right track very long, and you don't know if Christopher is going to stay okay, and you don't know if Lucas is going to be okay—though you'll find out about that in another later book called *Orbiting Jupiter*—but you do know that they are on the right path for right now. Maybe that's all that any of us can ever say. &

Making the Mock Newbery Their Own

A School/Library System Collaboration

ALPHA S. DELAP AND CECILIA MCGOWAN

It was a warm June Chicago night, and we were talking about Mock Newbery programs in public and school libraries over dessert. After a bite of dark chocolate mousse, Cecilia said to me, "Well, what if we partnered on a Mock Newbery program this Fall?" I clapped my hands like one of my second grade students and said, "Yes, please!" I had dreamed of this moment for a long time. "Let's be in touch at the end of the summer and see what is possible."

I teach at an independent school, St. Thomas School, preschool through grade 8, across Lake Washington from Seattle. In the past, I have run small Mock Newbery programs, like a traditional lunch book club. We have used the already curated book list from our local public library, which is part of the King County Library System, and usually a handful of fifth grade students participate.

Our library buys two to three copies of each book, and students share them and read voraciously. Right before the annual announcement of the ALA Youth Media Awards, we hold an election and present the results on a bulletin board display and announce our top three books in the school e-newsletter.

This year was different. Since Cecilia was the chair of the 2018 Newbery Committee, she had copies of hundreds of books at her disposal, and she generously let us borrow them. In the beginning of October 2017, she arrived with her first set of six boxes, and that's when I began the St. Thomas School Mock Newbery meetings in our main library. I took off the dust jackets of each book and kept the book and the dust jackets on a separate shelf in my library supply closet.

There was great enthusiasm and support for the program, from our head of school to faculty, many of whom offered to help. Our committee was made up of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Instead of six or seven students, interest surged to twenty-five students eager to find out about this new "book evaluation committee."

The Practicalities

In keeping with my pedagogical philosophy, I balanced structure with opportunities for experimentation and flexibility. The first order of business was to begin the nomination process. Each individual student committee member was

Dr. Alpha DeLap *is a teacher/librarian who lives in the Greater Seattle area. She is active in regional, state, and national library associations, including as a member of the 2020 John Newbery Committee.* ***Cecilia McGowan*** *is the recently retired Children's Services Coordinator of the King County (Washington State) Library System. She is the ALSC Vice-President/President Elect and was Chair of the 2018 John Newbery Award Selection Committee.*

Sophie has found some new books to read!

Sam has a knack for book evaluation.

responsible for selecting and nominating two of their favorite books that fit the ALSC Newbery criteria by the middle of December. In the third week of January, students planned to present their list of fifteen books to Cecilia formally. They needed to be able to explain why their books fit the specific award criteria.

Unlike past programs, the process of whittling down the selections themselves was an integral part of the experience. The students began by reading the blurbs and short aspects of the text and asking themselves, "Is this an example of the very best literature written for children this publishing year? Does it stand alone or is it part of a series? Is the audience for this book under or over fourteen years of age?"

With books piled and spread throughout the library, students met eight times to select, read, and analyze materials. Setting their lunch plates of food aside, they talked, laughed, and debated—evaluating more than four hundred books over a three-month period.

The Presentations

In the middle of January, I asked each student to prepare a short presentation about their favorite book and why it should be included on the Newbery ballot, making sure to mention the criteria itself.

"Are we allowed to ask Ms. McGowan for an autograph?" one student asked. I smiled and said, "I think that autographs might need to wait." However, I loved the respect and honor this question implies.

When the students presented their picks, many prepared PowerPoints; all of the students were ready and clear about their selections.

The Possibilities

Parents stopped me in the hallways and on the stairs to tell me how excited their children were about being part of the Mock Newbery committee. One mother paused for emphasis and said, "I just can't believe how much my son is reading! I absolutely love this program!"

In a postelection debriefing, students told me why they enjoyed the experience so much: "You let us make our own decisions about what we liked." "We really got to understand the Newbery Award criteria."

The key to the success of the program, besides access to the sheer volume of materials, was the commitment that we made in allowing the students autonomy in their evaluation, nomination, and election process. Ultimately the book that ended up winning was Laurel Snyder's *Orphan Island,* with Catherynne Valente's *The Glass Town Game* and Laura Ruby's *York* receiving honors. Though these titles did not get called out during the Youth Media Awards announcements this year, the St. Thomas School students now have the confidence in their own evaluation tools in ways that open up completely new programming possibilities. &

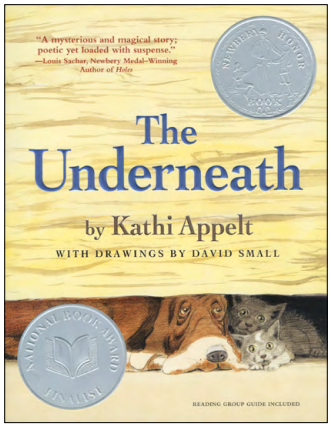
A Decade of *The Underneath*

A Conversation with Kathi Appelt

SHARON VERBETEN

If you were like me, you likely hooted with excitement when you heard that Kathi Appelt's *The Underneath* had received a Newbery Honor in 2009. My enthusiasm was tempered only by the fact that it didn't win the Newbery Medal itself.

It's hard to believe it's been a decade since the notable book was published—garnering much praise (including being a 2008 National Book Award finalist) but also trigger warnings about its graphic depictions of animal abuse.



While Appelt has had much literary success—including a second National Book Award finalist (2013) with *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp*—*The Underneath* was her debut novel. She's come a long way from coloring on the garage wall as a child—don't worry, that creativity was, thankfully, encouraged by her parents!

I was honored to speak with the very polite, present, and encouraging author by phone from her home in Texas recently.

Congrats on the anniversary and enduring success of *The Underneath* and your ensuing books. Did your parents always encourage your creativity?

KA: They were all about it. My dad read tons of Rudyard Kipling poetry to me growing up.

Did you always want to be a writer?

KA: I wanted to be a vet, but chemistry was not my forte. I always wanted to be a writer—but also a cowgirl! I have two grown boys, but I probably wouldn't have written for children if I hadn't had my own kids.

You've written more than forty books, many of them picturebooks. Do you prefer a particular format?

KA: In 2003, I was hired to serve on the faculty at Vermont College. They brought me in as a picturebook person, but I hadn't written a novel yet. It actually became a matter of honor. The novel code just kept eluding me. It wasn't that I didn't want to write a novel; I certainly did. When *The Underneath* came out, many people didn't know I had this whole body of work in picturebooks.

So one day, I wrote a memoir in prose poetry style. That book gave me some courage. I finally one day decided if I ever wanted to do it, I'd have to do it in these tiny chunks. Extended narrative still is hard for me. I kind of taught myself how to recognize what worked for me.

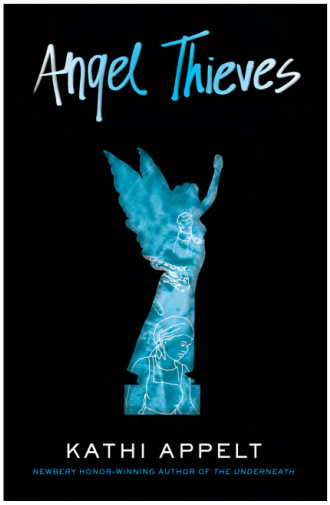
Many of your books feature animals; was that a natural subject for you?

KA: I'm an animal lover; I've always been an animal lover; I was a crazy horse girl. I have five cats—they showed up on our door. I'm right on the verge of being a crazy cat woman.

Some readers/adults expressed initial concern about the animal abuse depicted in *The Underneath*.

KA: When the book first came out, I had some hate mail…feelings were very strong. But animal abuse is very real. Kids need to know that—those emotional rehearsals where they can experience sadness and grief. A book is a safe place to have those experiences.

The Underneath takes place in a very distinct setting; how did you come to set it in a bayou near the Louisiana/Texas border?



KA: The natural world intrigues me. In college, I moved to East Texas with my sister; we lived in this tiny cabin. It was really back in the woods. Once you lived there . . . it has this sense of being old and remote and it feels like anything can happen back there, and probably does. It's so mysterious at the same time. When I was writing *The Underneath,* I recalled those feelings. Who's to say there aren't ancient alligators in the swamps of East Texas?

What did winning a Newbery Honor mean to you?

KA: That was life changing; it was amazing. I worked hard to put my heart in that book. It had so much of me in it. Things from my past were in it; it meant a lot to me.

What's next for you?

KA: *Max Attacks* is a picturebook in the pipeline with Simon & Schuster, as well as a young adult novel in spring 2019 with a magical realism bent, *Angel Thieves*. It has contemporary and historical storylines about a man and his son who live in an antiques store and they steal cemetery angels. The back story is based on a true story about a slave who lived in pre-Civil War Houston.

"Unpacking the Engineering Process" continued from page 8

are resources that can be easily leveraged to support STEM initiatives.

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Boost Your Career

How to Get Involved Professionally

ROBIN SOFGE

One of the things I love about librarianship, and youth librarianship in particular, is how much of a sharing profession it is. That's not limited to just sharing program plans and ideas; it also includes sharing our experiences, our professional networks, and our advice to support one another in continuing to develop as professionals. So if you have a question about how something works in an organization, ask someone to share their experience with you," said Amy Koester, the learning experiences manager at the Skokie Public Library in Skokie, Illinois. "And always be willing to share your experience with others, too."

Koester and four other library professionals shared their insights on how giving back to the profession energized them and, in some cases, helped them chart a new direction. They also offered advice on finding the right way to get involved, whether starting at the local or state level or going for participation in a national library association. These professionals also provided suggestions for getting your library to support your involvement.

Lisa R. Varga, executive director of the Virginia Library Association (VLA), was a youth services librarian when her library director was president of VLA and needed help with a committee. "I had no idea what I was getting into," Varga said. "I was a volunteer before I was executive director."

She worked at the Central Rappahannock Regional Library in Virginia for nine years, first as a youth services librarian and then as a human resources and staff training coordinator. Varga is currently a member of the International Council of Library Association Executives (ICLAE) of ALA and was recently selected to be part of the first class of the ALA Policy Corps, which aspires to develop a key group of experts with deep and continuous knowledge of national public policies in areas crucial to ALA's strategic goals.

"I found being involved in committees with their networking and exposure to a variety of committed professionals from various sizes of libraries from different regions helped me learn new techniques, approaches, and viewpoints. I brought these back to my library and community and helped create better, more meaningful service that I could not have imagined without that network of learning peers. Hallway conversations were as important as conference sessions in terms of my professional development!" said Marge Loch-Wouters,

Robin Sofge *is the Youth Services Supervisor at Montclair Community Library (VA) in Prince William Public Library System. She was a 2018 ALA Annual Conference panelist for Fresh Takes on Youth Services, served as Chair of the YALSA 2018 Summer Learning Taskforce, and was also on the ALSC Special Collections and Bechtel Fellowship Committee.*

whose service includes past ALA councilor, current president of the Wisconsin Library Association, lecturer at University of Wisconsin-Madison iSchool, and youth consultant for Loch-Works Consulting in Minnesota.

Robin Fogle Kurz, Ph.D., a self-employed writer and consultant who served more than fifteen years in public libraries and library science education, has served on the Editorial Advisory Committee for *Children and Libraries* and also on YALSA's Organization & Bylaws Committee. She said her volunteer experience in professional library organizations has been rewarding. She has a suggestion for getting involved. "The advice I always offer is jump in—attend a 101 session at a conference if possible, introduce yourself to officers, board members, and other group members whenever you have a chance, and volunteer for the strategic/processes committees before trying to get onto a book committee."

Dennis J. LeLoup, a retired school librarian whose committee work has included the ALSC Special Collections and Bechtel Fellowship Committee, 2014 Caldecott Committee, and past-president of the Indiana Library Federation, said a professor encouraged him to get involved professionally. He first got involved with a professional organization that is now known as the Association of Indiana School Library Educators (AISLE). "I was asked to be involved in membership and I said yes," LeLoup said. "I didn't know librarians outside of my local area until I got involved on the state level." Another colleague encouraged him to get involved nationally.

Although LeLoup retired this year, he plans to continue being active in the profession. "I'm only retired from my day job. I'll never retire professionally from ALA, ALSC, or AASL (American Association of School Librarians). I want to be involved and help others affect what is going on with children," said LeLoup.

Participation can range from virtual to in-person. For example, Koester, who has served on many committees including the ALSC virtual Grants Administration Committee, the in-person Public Awareness Committee, the 2014 Newbery Award Committee, and currently serves on the ALSC board of directors, said she first got involved with ALA and ALSC while in graduate school.

"I had a professor who talked about the value of the organizations and also made sure to impress upon us the fact that student membership rates are a great deal. For that first year or two, I was largely a passive member; I would read *American Libraries* and *Children and Libraries*, the AL Direct newsletters, and that was about it," Koester said.

She said she was soaking in a lot of information. As Koester approached the end of graduate school and started to look for jobs, she knew she was interested in public librarianship but didn't yet know if she was more suited for adult or children's librarianship. Koester attended her first ALA Annual Conference right after graduation and attended different conference sessions about public library services that ultimately helped her decide youth librarianship was for her. Koester also took advantage of the ALA jobs resources, both online and at the conference, including resume and cover letter help.

"While I didn't really know anyone involved in these organizations at the time, I definitely saw that folks who'd been in them for a few years, and who had careers in librarianship, found them to be an invigorating and network-expanding part of their careers. Witnessing that definitely planted the seeds of continued professional involvement for me," Koester said.

The first national library association Kurz became involved with was the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA). "Through my involvement with REFORMA and presenting at several REFORMA National Conferences, I learned the power of national organizations, made lifelong friendships, and gained the confidence I needed to become involved in other national library groups," Kurz said. "I think the value of all these groups lies in helping members learn how national library organizations function, making connections across the country, and being able to give back to the field."

Kurz said serving on the 2013 Pura Belpré Award committee was life changing because she worked with a talented committee and was able to give something special in terms of her time and expertise to both ALSC and REFORMA. Kurz said serving in professional organizations made her a more knowledgeable faculty member. "I was able to advocate for the importance of library groups in all my courses using my personal experiences. I also encouraged my youth services students to become involved at the local, state, and/or national level," Kurz said.

Loch-Wouters said she first became active professionally in her state library association that had and still has a dynamic youth services section. "I was appointed to a committee and loved working with and meeting so many new peers and colleagues. It gave me the confidence and budding leadership skills to take the leap and run for their board and eventually for chair of the section. All along the way I was mentored by veteran as well as librarian peers in my cohort. And I discovered that by being active, I could move youth librarianship forward! This proved just as true when I stepped up to more participation in ALSC!"

Koester said she learned through her involvement with the organizations she participated in, whether taking advantage of free or low-cost trainings, trying on leadership skills, or building her professional network through interactions with other members.

"The most meaningful experiences I've had with any of the groups I've been involved in have been those that allow me to

develop mentor/mentee relationships. I feel like I have benefitted greatly from the formal and informal mentors whose advice and support have guided my career, and I find very little as gratifying as paying that forward," Koester said. "To that end, I really take seriously any opportunities in which I'm asked to provide mentorship to fellow professionals. That may be through a formal program like the ALSC Mentorship Program, or it may be through more informal channels like when a colleague asks if I'm willing to chat with a newer professional about something on which I might have perspective. Supporting the work of other library workers, including but not limited to new professionals, is some of the most meaningful work that I do, and I feel strongly that it not only contributes to our profession as a whole, but also has downstream impacts on the impacts that we're able to provide the communities we serve."

Suggestions vary on how to best get involved. "There's no single right way to be involved in any of these organizations—depending on where you are in your career, how much time you feel you have for professional involvement right now, and what skills and ideas you may be looking to develop, the 'right way' for you could be something more passive like reading the ALSC Blog every day. The 'right way' for you could also be submitting your volunteer form to serve on a committee, or submitting a proposal to write an ALSC Blog post or teach an online course," Koester said.

She said the best way to get involved could also be to prioritize attending in-person association events to take advantage of both in-person learning and networking. "In my experience, if you just wait for the opportunities to be dropped in your lap, chances are you won't find the experience as gratifying or as worthwhile. Rather, think about what it is you're hoping to get out of your membership right now—and this can change over time—and then do a bit of sleuthing to see how you can put those wheels in motion," Koester said. "I only got really involved in ALSC once I made the conscious decision to chat up members at an ALSC Institute; it was that moment when I decided, okay, I want to be more involved, and I'm going to talk to folks who might be able to guide me in making that happen. There's a reason these are member-driven organizations: members make all the things happen. So be proactive about forming relationships and seeking what you want from the opportunities you see."

Varga said most associations have websites with contacts listed. "Find the leadership and reach out with your strengths." A strength could include proofreading, for example. "We're all in a rush to publish things." Another benefit of volunteering is that it can provide an opportunity to do work in a different area of librarianship, for example a youth services librarian can volunteer in a different area. "You don't have to stay in a straight line," Varga said.

Loch-Wouters added, "Our state associations need our time, talent, and leadership just as much as our national associations. You can do both!" She recommends being active on youth committees and boards, but also branching out in other areas of associations like public libraries, equity and diversity groups, intellectual freedom, small libraries, and more.

There are different strategies to get your library to support your involvement. "I would state to the administration how this has helped me," LeLoup said. "Look what it's done for me and it helped the school district too." Kurz agrees. "I was always able to get support by highlighting how an individual's involvement in larger library organizations reflects positively on the entire library (or library school) staff and by offering to make available all of the resources from the sessions that I attended at the conferences. Always start by explaining how your involvement benefits the larger institution, rather than focusing on how it might benefit you alone."

Loch-Wouters said for the first thirty years of her career, she worked at small libraries that could only support her attendance at state conference by paying for the registration and with work time and would only support national conferences with work time.

"Because I felt that all library voices should be heard, not just those from large urban libraries, I started a conference savings account and put money aside to send myself to conference. I ate soup mixes and ramen noodles, shared hotel rooms with many peers, and in general lived small while at conference," Loch-Wouters said. She said it made it affordable. She described the opportunity to participate at a state and national level as "tremendous" and said it changed her professional life and career.

Loch-Wouters added, "At my last full-time librarian job, I made national and state conference support (registration, travel, meals and lodging) part of my negotiation for the job. I made the case that the library receives far more (instant access to new trends and issues, positive changes to service because of the learning opportunities, and a voice at the association table representing our library and its philosophy) from that investment than they spend. It was a successful negotiation!"

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Moving from ECRR to ECRS

Getting Every Child Ready for School

Kathleen Campana

Dr. Kathleen Campana *is an Assisstant Professor at Kent State University's School of Information. Her research focuses on understanding the learning that occurs for children and youth in informal learning environments and how the environment influences their learning. She teaches in the area of children's and youth services.*

Have you ever wondered how well your storytimes and other programs are preparing children for school by providing the skills they need to enter school ready to learn? You are probably using the five practices from Every Child Ready to Read 2 (ECRR)—talking, singing, reading, playing, and writing—to support children's literacy learning, but are you using them to support other types of learning?

While researchers have yet to agree on what constitutes school readiness, work is being done to understand what knowledge and skills can best help children to be ready to learn in the formal education environment. In a review of literature related to school readiness, the following knowledge and skills were identified as important for school readiness:[1]

1. Emergent math skills—strong predictor
2. Attention skills—predictor
3. Early literacy skills—predictor
4. Fine motor skills—predictor
5. Internalizing and externalizing behavior—uncertain predictor
6. Social skills—uncertain predictor

Research has demonstrated that storytimes are encouraging the acquisition of some of these types of knowledge and skills for young children.[2] VIEWS2, a study of early literacy in public library storytimes, found a strong correlation between the early literacy content of the storytime and the children's early literacy behaviors. In addition, after storytime providers were trained and encouraged to be intentional and interactive with their storytime delivery, the research found an increase in the early literacy content and in the children's early literacy behaviors that occurred after their storytimes.[3] A more recent study found that storytimes are incorporating a variety of concepts across the knowledge areas and skills, identified above, that are important for school readiness. The study also uncovered that storytime providers are sharing information about the school readiness concepts with children in a variety of ways and providing opportunities for the children to interact with various concepts.[4]

Most importantly, storytime providers were injecting fun and interactive engagement into the ways in which they were presenting these school readiness concepts. They did this in part by encouraging children to answer questions, act things out, repeat content with them, and/or move and engage their bodies.

These are all things that you are probably doing as well, but do you know why they are important? Children learn best when they are mentally active and engaged, so when you provide them with the opportunity to engage with a concept in a play-based, interactive manner, you are

supporting their learning in a highly effective, developmentally appropriate way.[5]

Furthermore, VIEWS2 found that when storytime providers incorporated intentionality and interactivity into the planning and delivery of their storytime, they were able to increase the early literacy content and the early literacy behaviors of the children attending. Therefore, it is possible that being intentional and interactive with learning across a variety of domains identified as important for school readiness would help to increase young children's acquisition of the knowledge and skills that are crucial for success with learning in school.

What does this mean for you and your programs for young children? In addition to getting children ready to read, you can also get them ready to learn math, pay attention, write, control behavior and emotions, and interact with others.

You can prepare them for these skills in fun, engaging, and play-based ways through the ECRR practices that you already incorporate into your programs. And you can be more impactful by being intentional and interactive with them using the following methods.

Support emergent math skills by:

- inviting children to count along with you;
- having them identify numbers;
- pointing to items when you count them;
- asking children to count how many of something are present; and
- having children count how many are there after adding things or taking things away.

Support attention skills by:

- including visual clues to complement verbal instructions;
- asking similar, repetitive questions while reading so children learn what to attend to;
- providing prompts for children to use their listening ears; and
- working with caregivers to provide gentle redirects for children when they are not paying attention.

Support writing skills by:

- Providing children opportunities to practice writing/scribbling through nametags and/or craft;
- Incorporating finger plays that include detailed finger motions; and
- Talking about and providing ways for children to practice with letter shapes (e.g., painting letters in the air or forming letters out of pipe cleaners).

Support behavioral and emotional self-regulation by:

- Talking about and including books on behaviors and emotions;
- Providing opportunities for children to talk about appropriate behavior and to identify emotions;
- Providing clear, simple expectations for behavior;
- Encouraging children and their caregivers to take a break if they are struggling to control behavior and/or emotions.

Support social skills by:

- Talking about and including books that highlight friendships and other social concepts;
- Providing opportunities for children to interact with one another in storytime (e.g., pairing up to do the motions of a song or rhyme together); and
- Providing opportunities for children to interact in an unstructured manner during block, dramatic, or open playtime.

The most important piece to incorporating these skills is using a fun, interactive, play-based approach that incorporates the knowledge and skills important for school readiness. It also shows children that learning can be fun and enjoyable, which lays a foundation for engagement in lifelong learning.

Additionally, this approach helps further cement the library's role in early learning as a play-filled environment that encourages children to try new things, build new skills, and learn through play. &

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Amy Martin is the Member Content Editor for Everyday Advocacy, an initiative of ALSC.

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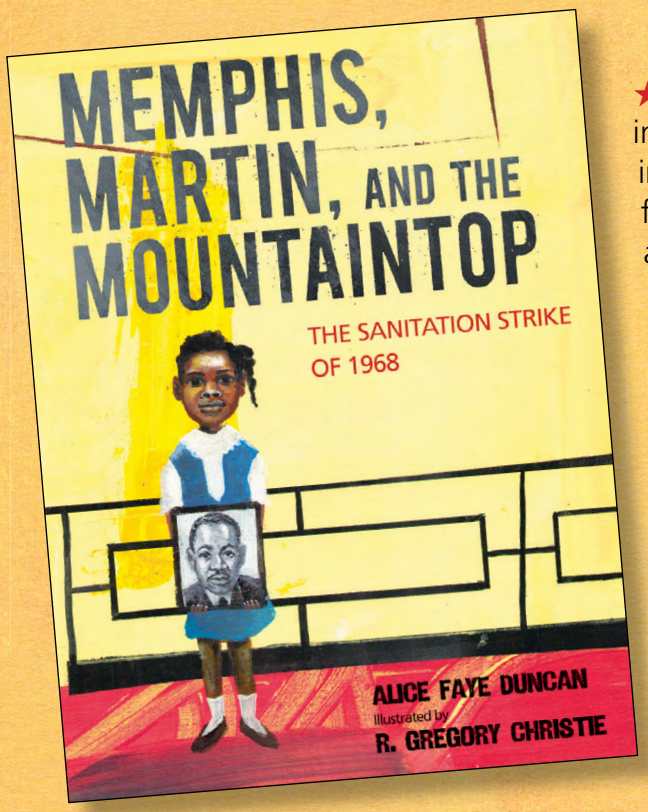

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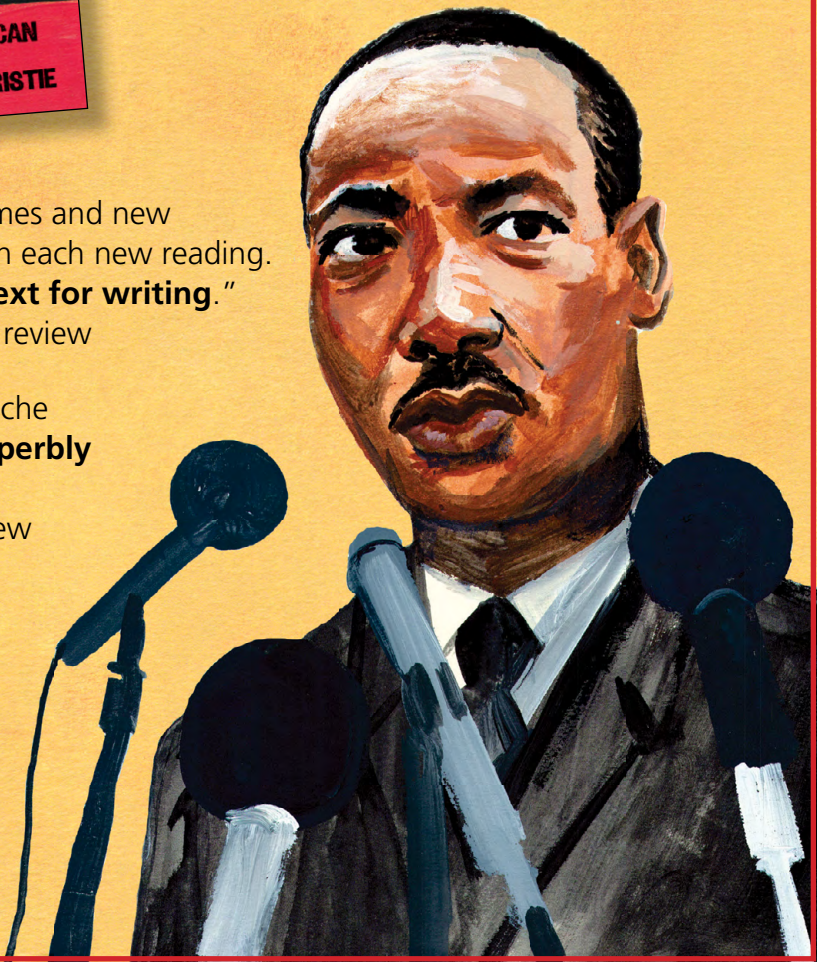

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