Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

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Messy and LOUD at the Library!
Poet to Poet: A Chat with Vardell and Salas
Great Grassroots Projects

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Editor's Note

Spiders and Snakes and Flies, Oh My!

By Sharon Verbeten

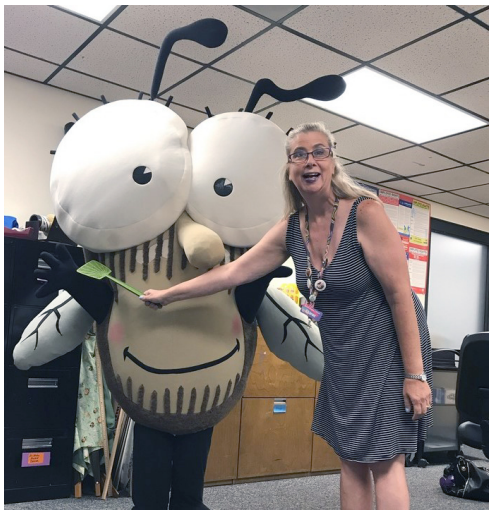
I really do have an indisputably fun job. Like most of you, I plan and execute programs for children that may or may not involve mess, live animals, food, noise—or all of the above—and live to tell the story (and file the obligatory statistics!).

As crazy as it gets—eighty-five kids in a hot room jam-packed with five live animals, zookeepers, and screaming babies—we usually take it all in stride because, well, *it's what we do.*

Sure, there's usually a literary component somewhere, maybe a storytime or passive poetry program. But while the rest of the year is, by comparison, fairly staid, summer allows for all our craziness to fly free and proud.

This past summer, I hosted Bug Week at my branch library—complete with a spider scientist (and live specimens!), a happy birthday celebration for the Very Hungry Caterpillar, and a dance party with Tedd Arnold's Fly Guy. It was great fun—for both the kids and me!

By the time you read this, summer will have passed, but hopefully our memories will live on, inspiring future programs. This year, bugs. Next year . . . ? &



Sharon takes a swat at Tedd Arnold's Fly Guy character during a visit to Brown County Library in Green Bay, WI, this past summer.

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Once Upon a Wall

Storytime Mural Project Increases Engagement, Attendance

MARIAH SMITALA

A dragon comes to life!

When I first started my position as one half of the team responsible for preschool storytime in summer 2017, attendance at our Friday morning program for kids ages four to six was stagnant and low. Later that summer we also learned that Friday mornings would no longer be a consistent time slot, at least not in fall 2017.

We had several options—make the storytime a once-monthly event, change the day or time, or eliminate the program. Luckily our storytime was given a second chance, along with a new name, day, and time, but it was up to us to prove this was the right move. Here's how my partner and I not only increased attendance from almost nothing to often twenty or more children a week, but also encouraged repeat attendance from the same families.

We knew we needed to make the program more visible—to have something to draw families in other than just the calendar. We also wanted the children to see their progress, so every time they came to storytime they would have something specific to show for it.

Finally, we wanted to make storytime a memorable experience for both the children and caregivers. Our goal was to give them something to look forward to, talk about to others, and stick with them for more than one day. We decided to create a mural on one of our walls that we would add to every week at storytime. In meeting all three of our goals, we also helped redefine our storytime.

We have chosen to base our semester builds—the term we use for the wall project during each storytime semester—on well-known folk stories or fairy tales. This helps introduce the kids to classic stories and helps draw in parents and grandparents, since most of the stories are familiar. It also ties well into our name, Once Upon a Time Storytime.

For our pilot build, we chose *Jack and the Beanstalk* because it was a very straightforward semester build, growing the beanstalk every week. At the first storytime, we told the story and then gave each child a paper magic bean they could plant on the wall.

Throughout the session, the beanstalk grew and grew, eventually reaching the clouds and finally the giant's castle. To really hammer in the memorable part of our goal, we made a big production out of the final storytime. We retold the tale but had a coworker play the part of the giant over a microphone from outside the room. We heard a large crash, and then emerged from the storytime room to find gold (bags of plastic coins) at the base of our beanstalk. The children could not believe their eyes. How had all of this gold mysteriously appeared? They each got to take home one sack of gold, which made the experience even more exciting.

Mariah Smitala *is Youth Services Librarian at Hedberg Public Library in Janesville, WI.*

A storytime mural project helps kids bring stories to life.

How did we do it? This project essentially cost us nothing since we used materials we already had available at the library. We die-cut various shapes out of colored paper, used leftover poster board to make the castle and white tablecloths for clouds on the final storytime of the semester. We also had leftover gold coins, found in a cupboard, that we wrapped in tissue paper to use as the giveaway.

When we realized that the semester build project was working, we became more ambitious. We brought in different materials to tape to the wall—like scrapbook paper, sparkle sheets, Christmas bows, doilies, and more. When we did dragons for a semester, we used tissue paper to create fire breath and metallic bows for his treasure horde, and during our *Hansel and Gretel* semester, we used sparkle paper to make gumdrops for decorating the gingerbread house.

We spend small amounts of money on the project, usually to have an exciting last storytime of the semester, but largely all of our materials are readily available at our library.

We've also altered how we end the storytime session. We still like to have a memorable and exciting event, but it has become more about the kids getting to do something, rather than us putting on a production. For example, when we did *The Princess and the Pea*, we had the children lie on a sheet of paper decorated as a bed to see if they could feel the pea (a two-inch wooden ball) beneath the mattresses.

For *The Little Red Hen*, we ended the storytime semester by allowing the kids to make bread dough and butter. Each child then got to take home their homemade butter and a store-bought bread roll. (The butter was made simply by putting cream into small jars and then shaking them for about fifteen minutes. We did some shaker songs to help motivate the preschoolers to shake.) Since we knew we wouldn't be actually baking the dough the kids made, it didn't have to be a perfect recipe. So, we set up stations where they could mix dry ingredients (like flour, salt, and yeast), mix water and flour to create dough, and knead the dough. Everything in this elaborate finish cost less than ten dollars.

All of the work that went in to creating and implementing this program truly paid off. In the first year, attendance not only increased dramatically, but many of the same families returned to storytime throughout the entire year. We have also begun our second year of the project, and though we are not seeing the same families as the first year (many of these kids started school in the fall), the families that have been coming are once again becoming regulars. We could not have asked for a better result. &

Mess Does Not Equal Stress

Making the Case for Discovery-Based Play

KATIE CLAUSEN

Children's librarians have no shortage of ideas for getting messy in the library. From paint to Play-Doh to shredded paper, the opportunities are endless.

We, as professionals, know why discovery-based play is important; does our administration, our maintenance department, or our board? I'd like to share some language I use to give stakeholders and staff a framework for the *why* behind the mess. My hope is that you can use these talking points to introduce or enhance messy play programs in your library.

Play is in our DNA. If you watch a baby for five minutes, you notice that exploration comes even before play. Children need to experiment with their surroundings to recognize and comprehend information. When children take in information through their senses, that information is sent to the brain to be interpreted. This creates connections in children's neural networks and our cognitive development forms. Here is a look at the power, and benefits, of messy play.

It breaks down language barriers. At Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin, IL, approximately 45 percent of our population is Spanish-speaking. While we offer many bilingual programs, messy play welcomes all languages. Diverse kids sit down in front of Play-Doh and learn together, talking in their own language or simply sharing through open-ended experiences and exploration. Children acquiring the English language can learn through process rather than product.

It breaks down social boundaries. Messy play is all-inclusive. It is not for any specific child, group, or population. Sometimes we can get stuck on "this is a program for you" and "this is a program for you." While there is a place for age- and population-specific programs, messy play is developmentally appropriate for everyone. Because of its focus on curiosity, messy play optimizes learning for all abilities and diverse learning styles. Amid a divided United States, it is promising to see children's worldviews shift when they play with someone different from themselves. Something changes in their eyes, and my hope is they are thinking, "Huh, that child is different than me, but just like me."

It is child-led, yet multigenerational. All of us, from nine days old to ninety-nine years old, need play. We also need to practice fine motor skills, imagine and create, socialize, and be body-aware. A storytime can practice these things, too, but often the adults are in the background or more passive participants in the program. When we have messy programs, I notice more phones being put away and caregivers engaging with their kids. Plus, with messy play, it's difficult for parents to "take over." With discovery-based process art or play, unlike a craft, there is no "example" or "correct" way.

It encourages twenty-first-century skills such as physical development, creativity, communication, social and emotional development, and STEAM. Engaged citizens need to be

Katie Clausen *is Coordinator of Early Literacy Services, Gail Borden Public Library District in Elgin, IL.*

Baby Adellayde explores shredded paper with her mom in play pit.

problem solvers and critical thinkers. We no longer live in a worksheets-based, restricted, monochromatic world. Giving kids opportunities to be creative, try and fail, and be hands-on with their world will help them succeed in school and later on. In our ever-changing, technology-centered world, kids need to develop physically and practice large motor movement. They need to have positive experiences so they can build their self-esteem, develop emotional regulation, and tolerate distress. Most of all, they need to build respect for themselves and others.

If you're looking for ideas for messy play, some of my favorite places to look are Pinterest, Little Bins for Little Hands, and the *Busy Toddler* blog. Highlights we have done at the library include potato flake dough, "nature soup" (water with everything from leaves to twigs to acorns mixed in), a shredded paper play pit, "painting" with water (kids love using grown-up paint brushes using just water!), washing doll clothes (using simple soap and water and then hanging the doll clothes on a clothesline), bins of dry or cooked noodles, a "forest" or "jungle" of broccoli with animal figurines, sand and shaving cream play, all forms of slime, and anything with water beads.

There are challenges to messy play, and those likely won't go away. I am committed to having messy play in the library, but there are still naysayers. I have had patron comments about allergies, such as using flour in Play-Doh, or wasting food products such as dry noodles. We always try to mitigate issues by using "taste safe" recipes, putting up allergy-warning signage, and using materials over and over. One box of dry noodles can last years, and people tend to feel better when we tell them that.

Set-up and clean-up take time. Whenever possible, I advocate for the "all hands on deck" approach. I will never convince every person from every department to help clean, or that messy programs are important. Visual images work. If staff pop into a program and see children and families engaging in play, or if I share a photo with staff, they often see evidence of success.

Mess and noise are byproducts of engaged play. If we don't offer messy play, we are ignoring evidence-based research that getting messy is essential to early childhood development. I would rather spend time cleaning up than going against science.

Play is in our DNA. If you watch a baby for five minutes, you notice that exploration comes even before play. Children need to experiment with their surroundings to recognize and comprehend information.

Here are some words to share with your managers, administration, and board. MESSY PLAY = observing, creating, learning, connecting, building, exploring, imagining, discovering, investigating, interpreting, processing, socializing, and even relaxing!

Whenever I bring my dog to the dog park, I let her tear apart sticks, roll in the grass, and even take a mud bath. Dog owners ask me, "How can you let her do that?" and I always answer, "I've never met a dog that can't get cleaned up."

I have also never met a child, or a library, that can't get cleaned up. &

Note: Messy Play can't be done alone! I'd like to thank the entire KidSpace team at Gail Borden Public Library, especially Early Learning Associate Paula Bosshart, who helps make messy programming possible, and Jennifer Bueche, director of KidSpace.

From Snowflakes to Avalanche

Meet Laura Purdie Salas, the Puzzle Poet

SYLVIA VARDELL

Laura Purdie Salas multitasks at her desk!

Laura Purdie Salas grew up in Florida, currently lives in Minnesota, is a former teacher, and is now a prolific poet and frequent presenter with more than 130 books to her credit. She has authored both poetry and nonfiction, as well as resource books for educators and aspiring writers. Her work has been recognized with multiple awards, including selection as a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Notable book, an International Literacy Association Teachers' Choice, and a Junior Library Guild Selection.

She has contributed to many educational series, including Capstone's Writer's Notebook books for young writers, and authored several books on getting published for aspiring authors. Her collection for teachers, *30 Painless Classroom Poems*, includes a fun variety of approaches. She has published poems in multiple anthologies and authored these notable poetry books: *Stampede! Poems to Celebrate the Wild Side of School!*; *BookSpeak!: Poems About Books*; *A Leaf Can Be . . .* , *Water Can Be. . .* , *A Rock Can Be. . .* ; *If You Were the Moon*; and the rhyming *Meet My Family! Animal Babies and Their Families*.

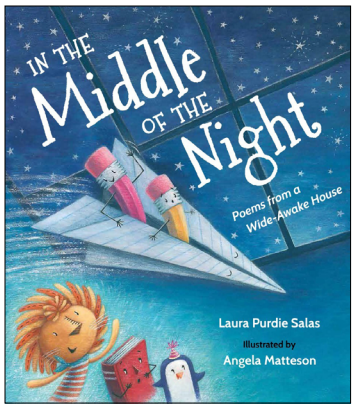
She also has a multitude of resources available online, including an excellent website (LauraSalas.com), a lively blog (*Writing the World for Kids*), an e-newsletter for educators (*Salas Snippets*), videos, and downloadable materials.

With three new books of poetry debuting in 2019, Laura calls it her year of Poetry Palooza. She thrives on blending words and puzzles into poetry. Here, she talks with me about the roots of her love of poetry, her approach to writing, and her advice for educators and librarians.

Q: Can you tell me about the roots of your love of poetry?

L: Growing up, my vast (ha!) poetry writing experience came in one fourth-grade poetry unit and one college class. In the mid-1990s, I heard poets Barbara Juster Esbensen and

Sylvia Vardell *is Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University where she teaches graduate courses in literature for children and young adults. She is a recipient of the American Library Association's Scholastic Library Publishing Award and has authored several books on literature for children, including co-editing poetry anthologies with poet Janet Wong. She maintains the* Poetry for Children *blog, writes a poetry column for ALA's* Book Links *magazine, and has conducted presentations at state, regional, national, and international conferences.*



Sharon Chmielarz present. They were amazing, and I started reading children's poetry books.

A few years later, my writing mentor suggested I journal about our daughter's health issues. I grumbled but followed directions—and poetry came out! Terrible poetry. But those few poem snowflakes grew into an avalanche as I fell in love with writing poems.

Q: Much of your work blends poetry and nonfiction or moves between the two genres. Why do you think that is? What connections do you see?

L: Joyce Sidman's *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems* blew my mind. So much of our world is categorized and classified that we sometimes miss opportunities to celebrate the overlap, the connections. Although I adore charts and lists and categories, I seem to write things that undermine them! Science poems celebrate our magnificent, messy world with clarity and precision. They make a fun entry point for nonscientific thinkers and offer deeper connections to scientifically minded readers.

Q: You clearly enjoy experimenting with the form and shape of poetry, even inventing your own form, the "riddle-ku." If you had to make a list of surefire poem forms that children should experience and enjoy, what would that include and why?

L: I do love it! I'll celebrate brevity here. For reading, here are what some favorite forms offer:

1. haiku—focus and mindfulness
2. things to do if . . .—information and metaphor
3. poems for two voices—linking readers together
4. mask poems—empathy builder
5. list poems—unintimidating, sometimes surprising
6. ekphrastic poetry—response, emotion, connection
7. limericks—humor
8. riddle poems—puzzles, close reading
9. triolets or poems with refrains—repetition, oration, structure
10. odes—gratitude!

Q: You have created many resources to help educators and others introduce poetry to children, including books, newsletters, and teaching materials. For those hesitant to dip into poetry, how would you recommend they begin?

L: Well, you are my inspiration in that regard! Here are my basic tips for intimidated educators.

- Read anthologies (like your collaborations with Janet Wong!) that introduce many voices and styles.
- Read poetry often and out loud.
- Feel how you feel. It's *okay* to not like every poem!
- Let listeners respond to the poem honestly.
- Don't worry about having all the answers! It's better if you don't.
- Approach with joy! Ditch reverence. When you enjoy poetry, you'll grow poetry lovers all around you.

Q: Your work for aspiring writers—both children and adults—is also noteworthy. Do you think everyone can write poetry? Why should they try?

L: Yes, absolutely. Can everyone write *amazing* poetry? Maybe not. But I can't knit anything amazing, and I still love it. (I have gifted several scarves knitted with love and dropped stitches!) My poetry (even my terrible poetry) surprises me with my own thoughts and makes me think deeply. It also builds writing skills across all styles. (I highly recommend Amy Ludwig VanDerwater's *Poems Are Teachers* for educators.)

Q: I've been lucky enough to collaborate with you (along with poet Janet Wong) on several *Poetry Friday* anthologies, and you have such a knack for creating a beautiful poem even when given an assigned topic. You've written cinquain poems, acrostic poems, diamantes, found poems, and even shape poems. What is the secret to finding your focus or form for writing an assigned poem?

L: Thanks! My (ssh!) secret is trial and error. I just try one form after another. It's like shopping for pants. Too long. Too short. Um . . . no. Just no. I can't tell which form fits until I try several on. I love playing with words, so it's fun! (Unlike pants shopping.)

Q: What do you think librarians can uniquely offer when it comes to promoting poetry reading and writing?

L: I think librarians' biggest gift is presenting poetry in an anxiety-free atmosphere. Storytimes and book clubs, simple poetry stations, readings and slams . . . A kid can just show up and discover the world, with no fear of judgment or bad grades. Bravo!

Q: This is clearly your Poetry Palooza year with three new poetry books being published. Congratulations! Can you give us some back story on how these books came to be?

L: Thank you! I'm thrilled! I wrote and sold them in different years, and each one is beautifully illustrated by a different genius.

Snowman – Cold = Puddle: Spring Equations: While brainstorming different nonfiction structures, I thought, "What about equations?" A migrating eagle's fish dinner became:

> talons + pond = fast food

And I got to pair the equations with science sidebars. What could be better?

In the Middle of the Night: Poems from a Wide-Awake House: Someone wrote a Fifteen Words or Less poem on my blog about chalk coming to life. I connected that with my "Lights Out at the Bookstore" poem in *BookSpeak!* Suddenly, I wondered what all our things do while we're asleep! From the garden hose to homework to library books, they are mostly up to fun and games. Although rocks . . . well, here's my shortest poem in the book.

> Ready to Rock? No
> End of day = time to play
> But I admit: I like to sit

Lion of the Sky: Haiku for All Seasons: For National Poetry Month in 2014, I created riddle-ku, a mash-up of riddle, haiku, and mask poems. I had so much fun with those (and they're still on my blog)! Writing a whole new book's worth to celebrate the seasons was a grand adventure. Here's a spring one:

> twigs, sticks, mud, feathers—
> I'm a closely woven home
> for cheep-chirping chicks

Congratulations, Laura, on three new books out this year—each unique and inviting. I can't wait to see what you puzzle through poetry next! &

A Librarian Can Be . . .

A librarian can be a . . .

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Z, a librarian will nurture your mind.

The Littlest Learners

Presenting Coding Concepts for Preschoolers

HENRY DRAGENFLO

The Coding Corner allows children and their parents open access to play with the same toys and robots that they've used in the Coding Concepts program.

Coding is a set of complex skills that combines art, language, and logic. With so much learning and creating happening in digital worlds, there is a strong impetus to figure out how, and how early, to teach coding skills to kids.

However, underlying coding skills are concepts that very early learners can comprehend and practice in preparation to learn coding. These concepts are fundamental to much of the thinking and understanding that happens in STEM subjects. Presenting these concepts in library programming improves digital literacy and bolsters the work we do with early literacy skills. While parents and caregivers play a crucial role in using coding concepts in a child's daily life, librarians can help by embracing the role of media mentors.

At Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, we are introducing early learners ages three to five and their parents and caregivers to concepts that precede the ability to learn coding skills. Most coding skill learning and practice is aimed at older elementary students, starting around fourth grade, which is when STEM learning gets a boost.

Coding can happen for early learners because this thinking is what we see when we say kids are little scientists. They are exploring and beginning to grasp how the world is organized (sorting), how to talk about a thing without it being present (signs and symbols), how things interact (conditional if-then), and how to predict what will happen next (sequences and patterns). They are even learning what happens when things don't go as expected (testing). And these are the concepts we have built into our program.

How, and How Early?

In "The Roots of STEM Success," the writers convey "what" (thinking dispositions), "when" (infancy onwards), and "who" (anyone who works with families) components for developing STEM skills:

> The STEM disciplines require not only content knowledge but also robust thinking dispositions—such as curiosity and inquiry, questioning and skepticism, assessment and analysis—as well as a strong learning mindset and confidence when encountering new information or challenges. These need to be developed in a child's early education, beginning in infancy and continuing through third grade to lay the roots for STEM success. And where can that happen? Libraries, for one, can address this . . . the lack of developmentally appropriate, strong STEM learning opportunities for families with young children represents a great opportunity for informal education.[1]

Henry Dragenflo *is Youth Services Librarian at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh–Woods Run.*

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) also supports the idea that early learners should engage with concepts for future coding success: "Coding can be engaging and fun, but it's only meaningful when there are strong higher order thinking (HOT) foundational skills first put in place, helping young children understand the process of coding. Young children can't create meaningful experiences through coding without these foundational skills and without adults to help support their learning."[2]

At the same time, we want to ensure that how we introduce these concepts, and how we play with them, is developmentally appropriate. That's how we know we are not going to teach coding skills, but instead focus on presenting concepts that are already present in a child's daily life using the methods librarians have already honed.

Making a pizza is an example of using a sequence, as is coding the Bee-Bot to go pick it up.

Little Learners: Coding Concepts

The scene is very familiar. Parents, caregivers, and children gather at the library and sit together in a comfortable, friendly space. The librarian begins the program with a song and a welcome to everyone that includes an explanation that what we learn about today won't be a coding skill. It will be a concept that can be seen happening in coding and one that you can practice no matter where you are.

We present six concepts, each in a different program: (1) Sorting, (2) Sequences, (3) Patterns, (4) Testing and Trying Again, (5) Conditionals, and (6) Signs and Symbols. Each program is designed to define the concept, show how it is used, and show how it happens in a family's daily life, all wrapped up in the structure of a storytime with books, songs, and felt boards.

Librarians often start with Sorting, so here's a look at a program with that concept. After a welcome song, kids and parents hear that sorting is something computers and robots do all the time, but what you might not think about is so do we! Sorting happens when you put your groceries away at home, when you play memory games, when you find all the things in your house that are green, or when you stack blocks from biggest to smallest. That's all sorting!

We read a book like *Sam Sorts* by Martha Jocelyn or *Sort It Out!* by Barbara Mariconda and talk about how the characters use sorting. Then it's time to practice. There are many shapes in many different colors on a felt board. How should we sort them? By color then by shape? Or the other way? Another fun activity is to sort the audience. If you're wearing blue shoes, moo like a cow. If you're wearing white shoes, roar like a dinosaur.

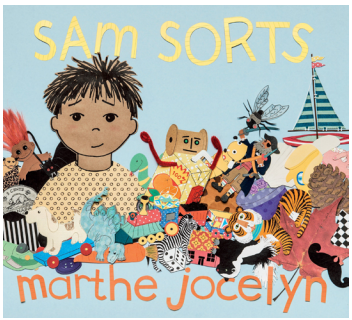
There are different books and activities for each of the six concepts, too. For instance, during the Sequences session, we can make a Sequence Symphony by handing out musical instruments and arranging pictures of the instruments on the felt board. Playing the instruments in order of the pictures demonstrates the idea of a sequence. Then you can change the order and make a new one!

Cubetto lends itself very well to parents and children playing together and telling stories with coding.

In Testing and Trying Again, try throwing a balloon into a bucket. In Signs and Symbols, code the librarian by making a sequence of arrows that the librarian follows. The arrows are the sign for which way to go. One common question here—what's the difference between sequences and patterns? A sequence is a set of things or events that happen in order. A pattern emerges when a sequence repeats.

When coding is mentioned, a quick mental image usually includes computers and screens, and that's fair. But coding, which really is just giving something instructions, can happen in many offline, screen-free ways.

After the storytime elements, we encourage parents and caregivers to play with their kids to practice the concept of the day. The main go-to is to reuse or expand on the activities already presented. Go back to the felt board, or pick up the instruments again, or try a new challenge with the balloon. During this guided play, kids and parents practice how they can use these concepts at home.



Books like *Sam Sorts* show how coding concepts can happen anywhere.

Some tools to help kids grasp concepts.

Digital Literacy and Media Mentorship

Many people associate coding with technology, and with that comes thoughts about how to use it, especially with young children. An important part of Little Learners: Coding Concepts is digital literacy and media mentorship.

Between the books and activities of the storytime, find a quick moment to speak to parents and caregivers with tips about media mentorship—something like "consider giving your devices a bedtime an hour before your child's bedtime" or "when selecting apps, look for ones that offer your child choices, rather than just expecting them to push buttons." Digital literacy is another area where we want to support parents and caregivers.

Digital literacy mirrors other kinds of literacy, such as developing a vocabulary, fluency, and mastery over the subject. These tips are meant to help adults looking for guidance about how to understand and talk about the myriad of forms information takes in a digital setting.

Librarians are already excellent at this. Some parents of early learners may not know about board books in just the same way that some parents might not know about good technology to use with early learners. They might think that the only way to go is through an iPad, just as they might want to start their kids on old classics that may or may not be suitable. Librarians have a chance to show parents more options, to help them develop skills in finding reliable information online and to help them become more digitally literate.

Media mentorship is about guiding parents and caregivers to information about useful and healthy ways to use technology. "What apps are best? How much screen time should I allow? What could happen if I don't do this right?" These are questions that may arise, and libraries, as a platform for trusted information and informal learning, can answer them.

Accessing resources like the Fred Rogers Center or NAEYC are great ways to get ideas to help parents feel more confident in their choices about using technology. What we need to remember is that we have a chance to help parents and caregivers make informed choices about the role technology will have in how their child is experiencing the world.

Guided Play

Mr. Rogers put it like this, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning, but for children, play is serious learning."[3]

The real key to success in this program, or any other early learning program, relies on parents and caregivers using the ideas after they leave the library. For example, it's helping parents realize that sorting can happen at the grocery store, signs and symbols are on telephone poles and doorways, testing is a way we can deal with an unexpected outcome. We can help caring adults feel like they understand the concepts and can see how they apply to the everyday life they have with their child through play.

Guided play is also when we have time to use some coding toys. Our typical picks are Bee-Bots, Code-a-Pillar, and Cubetto because these toys are intuitive, robust, and fun, and they have a clear connection to the coding concepts. Not every family will be able to have these toys at home, which makes the library a special place and helps us fulfill our role as providers of access to technology. &

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PEER-REVIEWED

Adapting the Reggio Emilia Approach in Libraries

KATHERINE HICKEY

A child's creative expression.

After the devastation of World War II, the parents of the Italian city of Reggio Emilia came together with a plan to build early childhood schools that would foster rich learning environments and critical thinking for their children.

That philosophy, known as the Reggio Emilia Approach (REA), was developed in the mid-1940s and was groundbreaking due to its participative and collaborative nature among children, parents, and educators.

Parents sold abandoned tanks and horses left by Nazi soldiers and used the funds to build the schools with their own hands.[1]

In this way, parents became intimately involved and invested in their child's education, which remains to this day a particularly important dimension of the REA.

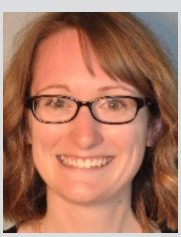
Esteemed local teacher Loris Malaguzzi joined the effort and would later be credited as the founder of the REA.[2] The REA continued to spread throughout Italy and the rest of Europe in the 1980s, and in 1991, the preschools of Reggio Emilia gained international acclaim as one of the top ten schools in the world by Newsweek.[3]

The REA continues to inspire educators worldwide, with new books and articles consistently being released on the topic. Yearly conferences and workshops abound, and teachers can join study groups to travel to Reggio Emilia and see the schools in person.[4] As the REA's popularity and reputation for being a "gold standard" for education continue to rise, it is worth asking if public libraries have anything to learn.[5]

Do the guiding principles of the REA transfer to a library environment, and can they enhance existing early childhood programming? This is the question I set out to answer. While public librarians may have used the REA, there is no clear documentation of it in the academic literature, and I located only one blog describing the use of the REA in libraries.[6] The following article will provide an overview of the core principles of the REA, a description of how I sought to apply them to a monthly library art program, and how the program was received, with a final exploration and assessment of the merit of the REA in public libraries.

Literature Review

There is no definitive list of guiding principles of the REA. Some scholars identify twelve based on the writings of Loris



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Beautiful raindrops!

Malaguzzi, others use eight or nine.[7] This lack of definitive articulation is because the REA was never intended to be a replicable approach. It is constantly evolving and being adapted. Only schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, can be authentic REA schools. When adapted elsewhere, they are described as "Reggio-Inspired."[8] Because the REA is intended to be guided by local environment and culture, replicating it verbatim in a different environment would immediately cause it to lose its value. Therefore, various disciplines and fields have sought to modify it to meet their unique goals and outcomes. While prevalent in the field of education, the REA has been adapted to the fields of music and disability research.[9] This is why it is called an "approach," instead of a method, and what renders it a particularly intriguing approach to use in libraries.

For the sake of this literature review, I chose to highlight the nine guiding principles as identified by Lella Gandini in 2008 and linked to on the website of the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA).[10] The NAREA is the leading authoritative body for REA practice in the United States. The principles are:

1. **The image of the child.** Children have rights. An educational environment should support the rights of children to learn, make decisions, and be contributing members of society.
2. **Children's relationships and interactions within a system.** Children's learning does not occur in isolation. It is immersed in a larger school and community system that should be examined, understood, and contributed to.
3. **The role of parents.** Parents are co-teachers and should be active participants in their child's learning.
4. **The role of space.** The physical space where learning occurs should be welcoming and designed to foster communication and group work. The space should encourage discussion and exchanges.
5. **Teachers and children as partners in learning.** Children act as "researchers." They pose questions and seek answers to them, instead of the answers being passively given to them.
6. **Not a preset curriculum but a process of inviting and sustaining learning.** Teachers use the feedback they receive from children to inform their curriculum.
7. **The power of documentation.** A child's work is to be examined, studied, and valued. These "documents" are to be displayed and appreciated by all individuals in the school.
8. **The many languages of children and the atelier.** Learning should occur in an "atelier" (i.e., workshop) setting. The atelier is equipped with many materials to choose from that are readily available and easy to access. Children have many "languages" to express themselves, and teachers should provide the tools to facilitate the expression of those languages.
9. **Projects.** Projects provide a structure for learning and a format to encourage discussions and collaborative work.

The Role of Art

The REA is highly visual in nature and often relies on student-driven art projects to create learning experiences. The open-ended nature of art enables what Malaguzzi named "a hundred languages" of creativity.[11] This artistic outlet creates a mode of communication for young children who are not yet fully competent in writing and speaking.[12] Children's learning, he argued, is stifled by a lack of choices, or "languages" to speak. Being trusted with the ability to make choices through the use of materials activates a sense of agency and responsibility.

For this reason, REA studios, called ateliers, are often saturated with art supplies and natural materials readily displayed and available on carts or shelves. The classroom is transformed into an art studio where all materials exist to support a child's creative expression and learning. Called "the third teacher," it is inviting and celebrates children's contributions and voices.[13]

Group Work

The atelier is set up to inspire collaboration and group work. Children work in groups on large projects to be displayed. The artwork then takes on a metaphorical meaning—just as each child contributed to the project to make it interesting and beautiful, then too does each child contribute to society and give it meaning and value. Teachers and parents are "co-constructors" who do not passively relay information. Instead, they rely on the questions and interests of the group to guide curriculum.[14] This aspect of the REA, called progettazione, is particularly reminiscent of current group work models like inquiry-based research and emergent curriculum.

Social Learning

The REA emerged from a very specific time and culture. After the fall of fascism in Italy, the parents of Reggio Emilia wanted their children to learn how to be citizens of a global world. Specifically, they wanted their children to be able to identify societal ills and think critically about solutions. To this end, children in RE settings are encouraged to actively think of their role in various social spaces: family, school, and community. They aren't only participants or spectators; children are actors with the innate right to construct their world. They come to view themselves as participants informed by values with the capacity to make choices that contribute to the common good.[15]

Documentation

Learning culminates in a publicly displayed record, which might include a final collaborative art piece, as well as any record of the process of learning, such as a photograph or film.[16] Publicly displaying (or documenting) learning elevates the voice of the child and makes visible their dignity. Additionally, it provides conversation fodder between parents, teachers, and children who can collectively discuss learning, process, and trial and error. It acts as a witness to the larger community about children's thoughts and ideas and invites community members into the mind of children.

Limitations

The REA has been scrutinized by academics and educational philosophers for its idealized approach to Early Childhood education. Indeed, many of the principles informing the REA are extremely difficult to implement and replicate. The REA assumes a certain access to financial resources, administrative support, low teacher-child ratios, and adaptable classrooms. Johnson argues that by attempting to implement the REA in North America, educators water down the principles yet are celebrated for their effort due to the trendy and attractive rhetoric of the REA.[17] This results in a poor learning environment more concerned with using a popular label than

Displaying children's artwork is important to self-esteem.

quality education. Teachers are then complicit in perpetuating a colonialist mindset that steals foreign educational models never intended to function for their audience.

While the REA can theoretically be adapted and modified for any culture and environment, scholars have questioned its quick rise and relevance in North America. Specifically, learning the REA is expensive and time consuming, thereby turning it into a model only accessible to upper-class families. The REA comes to be associated with an elite class of educators that can afford to travel to Italy for the prestigious summer study program.[18] This further supports the rhetoric of educational colonialism motivated by capitalism and prestige.

It is worth questioning if the REA contains any theories or concepts that are inherently worth importing given that they are already widespread in most early childhood learning spaces. Does the REA truly present any new or valuable information? Or is its packaging simply more alluring than others? Indeed, the focus on natural materials, group work, and documentation evokes a sense of beauty and wonder. Yet being outside, doing group work, and displaying projects in the classroom aren't particularly novel.

These concerns haven't prevented the REA from continuing its monumental rise to educational stardom. However, they persist as valuable insight and keep educators grounded in an effort to curtail the REA from simply being a popular trend or hype.

Research Question

As a librarian, I strive to offer the highest quality programs and learning experiences for patrons. The REA's focus on environment and culture made it appealing to me, as the library is a public asset that seeks to increase citizenship

and community engagement. In fall 2018, I set out to answer the following question: What is the REA's relevance to public libraries and how can it modified for an early childhood library program?

Method

I developed four monthly art programs for children ages four and five, called The Children's Art Studio. Each program centered on a theme unique to Oklahoma City (where my library is located) in an effort to bring in the element of environment and citizenship. The four themes were the Oklahoma City skyline, severe storms, wind, and the state bird (scissor-tailed flycatcher). These themes were chosen because all participants would have some baseline experience of them, and they would provide sufficient fodder for conversation and individualized experience. I spent six months reviewing the literature on the REA and immersing myself in online communities to ensure I had a solid grasp of the approach.

The program began with an introduction of the theme, the reading of a related picture book, and a conversation about each child's experience of the topic. For example, during the program about storms, children talked about their favorite kinds of storms, what they do when there are storm warnings, and ways to overcome feelings of fear during storms. These conversations were crucial to make the art relevant to their lives and to integrate the element of social learning.

Next, I explained that the group would be working together on an art project that would be displayed in the children's area of the library in a rotating exhibit. Each child would contribute to a larger work of art thereby participating in group work and documentation. The exact nature of their contribution varied each month and is described below. Caregivers were encouraged to support their child but not direct the project or choice of materials. Displaying the work of art would allow for other library customers to witness the kind of learning that occurs in libraries and for children to feel a sense of ownership over the space.

After the introduction, the children dispersed to four large tables. Against the back wall of the space, ten to fifteen different kinds of materials and supplies were available. The room was set up to be inviting and inspire creativity. The tables were covered with brown butcher paper to make it feel like a workspace, and the materials were arranged by coherent categories (glues, fabrics, paints, tools, etc.) for clarity. No example was provided in order to encourage creativity instead of replication. The children then worked thirty to forty-five minutes, at which time I collected their work and assembled it. Once assembled, it was taken to the children's area and displayed with a sign saying, "Exhibit created by the Children of the Belle Isle Library."

The core REA elements of art, documentation, group work, social learning, parents as collaborators, and material choices were present. However, given that library programming rooms aren't fixed in their purpose or use, the concept of the atelier was adapted to the best of my ability but lacked the vibrancy and whimsical elements often found in REA learning spaces.

Projects

The Oklahoma City Skyline. I identified fifteen well-known buildings in Oklahoma City, traced them on cardboard, and cut them out. Each child could choose which building to work on and were tasked with embellishing it with the available materials. They were provided with pictures of the actual buildings for inspiration. Once finished, the buildings were set next to each other on a shelf creating a skyline of the city. Children were then asked to write down on note cards what they like about living in Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma Storms. I cut out sixty cardboard raindrops of different sizes, and the children embellished them. The raindrops were strung together vertically and then hung from a wooden dowel creating a "wall of rain." Available materials were all in cold colors and generated a conversation about the differences between cold and warm colors.

Oklahoma Winds. Children created and decorated pinwheels that were planted in a Styrofoam block and displayed on a shelf. The pinwheels were used to represent the wind turbines in southern Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Scissortail Bird. Children embellished birds cut from paper plates and created their own version of a scissortail bird. They could also paint a small wooden birdhouse. The birds were hung together from a branch to create a mobile.

Findings

Three elements of the REA significantly enhanced the quality of the program, compared to similar art programs I have offered in the past.

Merit of Art Display. The programs yielded beautiful, interesting, and unique works of art displayed in the library. Library customers regularly commented on them and they added visual interest to an otherwise plain wall. Several children returned to the library specifically to see the projects hung and expressed pride at their work being in the building. Documentation reinforced the reality that the library belongs not to librarians, but to members of the community.

Creativity. Providing a wide array of open-ended materials saved money and amplified creativity. Because there was no example of a finished product, the children were forced to use their creativity and imagination with the materials. This clearly challenged them, and I was asked multiple times, "How are we supposed to do this?" I responded, "However you choose to!"

Having a wide assortment of materials allowed for choices, which produced surprisingly diverse works. This was most clearly seen in the Oklahoma Storms projects. Each raindrop is different and reflective of the preferences and artistic inclinations of the children. The open-ended nature of the projects lent itself well to a low-cost program. Because the materials were not being used to fulfill a specific purpose or outcome, they could be recycled over and over again. Paint, fabric, paint sticks, pom poms, markers, cardboard: these are supplies that many libraries already have on hand.

Connection to Place. The REA's focus on environment encouraged me to think about unifying themes in the lives of the children who attended the program and to integrate them into their work. The ten-to-fifteen-minute introduction of and conversation about the theme produced thoughtful and meaningful interactions. The children talked about personal experiences, their feelings, and their attachment to place. During the first program about the Oklahoma City Skyline, one child said, "I love where I live because my family is here." While discussion is encouraged in dialogic reading techniques used in storytimes, the quality of the discussion was significantly higher in the Children's Art Studio compared to what is usually achieved in storytime. I credit this to the fact that the program themes were rooted in daily life and provided an opportunity to express opinion and preference.

In addition to these positive results, there were drawbacks that made me question the transferability of the REA to libraries.

Leaving Artwork. While the final displays delighted library customers, they created some unexpected tension for some of the participants. Participants were confused about why they couldn't take their creations home at the end of the program. To address this issue, I explained the display during the introduction of the program, and that their artwork was so valuable everyone in the library wanted to see it.

This did not appease their frustration, and so if a child wanted to take their project home, they were permitted to do so. By the third project, I doubled the materials and encouraged children to make one to take home and one to display. This reveals the inherent tension in the concept of documentation—what is more important, that children get to have ownership over their work and decide what comes of it, or that library customers get to benefit from it? In light of libraries' commitment to freedom, asking children to leave their creations at the library against their will is an inherent conflict and violation of their agency.

Child-Led. In a typical REA setting, teachers listen to students' interests and design projects around them. This is an obvious limitation in a library setting where attendance fluctuates, and programs need to be planned in advance. While the child's voice and agency were reflected in the choice of materials, it was not reflected in the actual content of the program. I tried to compensate for this by making available materials

Pretty painted pinwheels.

the children expressed interest in. For example, paint sticks were popular in the first program so I made sure they were included in future programs. In this way, their interests were acknowledged and accommodated. However, this falls short of REA practice as the Children's Art Studio was still programmer-led.

Local Content. The Oklahoma-themed content proved to be an asset, but also quickly exhaustible material. Finding four unique, locally based themes relevant to all children who would attend was challenging. This coupled with the lack of child input in program content made for a particularly difficult and research-intensive planning period.

Attempting to adapt the REA to a public library setting was challenging, surprising, and rewarding. Specifically, it forced me to think about the environment children are immersed in and use it as program inspiration. The participating children had much to share about this topic and seemed genuinely excited to talk about their neighborhood, city, and state. REA concepts elevated and amplified an otherwise standard early childhood art program through materials exploration, documentation, and social learning. I regard theses three elements as the most valuable contributions of the REA to public library programming.

Other environment-focused theories, such as Connected Learning and Environment-Based Learning, are inquiry-driven, meaning the students seek to solve a problem, often scientific in nature, in their environment.[19] The environment is a source of problems and solutions, rendering the relationship between student and environment largely transactional. The REA, on the other hand, uses the environment as a worthy subject of analysis and curiosity. Problem-solving isn't exempt from the approach, but it isn't its focus. The environment inspires a sense of ownership, responsibility, and wonder and is valued for its own sake.

This sense of appreciation for the environment is then transferred to the child's work through documentation. Just as the environment is to be examined and appreciated, so is the child's art. Publicly displaying a child's work certainly enhanced the aesthetic of the children's area, but it also instilled a clear and unique sense of pride and joy. As mentioned in the findings, documentation should not stand in opposition to a child's agency and ownership over their work. I circumvented this by having children make duplicates, but there may be other alternatives to explore.

By having few special materials out for each project (birdhouses and Styrofoam blocks were the only special supplies purchased), the program was surprisingly affordable. The layout (having many materials available to choose from) reinforced the concept of the atelier. The room became a workspace with tools and inspired a sense of possibility. It was not unusual for a child or caregiver to comment on the amount of materials available while walking into the room. This generated a feeling of pride toward their work as well as pride towards their decisions. Librarians may not be able to replicate a true atelier, but they can create a "possibility-rich environment" encouraging materials exploration and choices by diversifying materials available and not encouraging the use of any one tool.[20]

I intentionally did not advertise the Children's Art Studio as an REA program. For one, it is not necessary for caregivers and children to know the theoretical underpinnings of a program to enjoy it. But more importantly, using the term may have conjured up a set of expectations among caregivers who were familiar with the REA. Even though the REA is free to be adapted and scholars claim there is no one true way to implement it, there are still assumptions about what such a program might look like. For this reason, I intentionally used the verb "adapt" to signal borrowing and learning from as opposed to appropriating. Adapting the REA is not intended to reflect the use or mastery of a certain trend. Ultimately, it matters little which approach is used in programs as long as it supports early literacy and learning.

I encourage children's librarians to consider the value of social learning and documentation in their programs. While my experimentation did not (and could not) lead to a definitive and absolute embrace of the REA, it is a rich and thoughtful intellectual tradition that values the contributions of children and seeks to form them into good citizens. This is a goal public libraries can get behind. &

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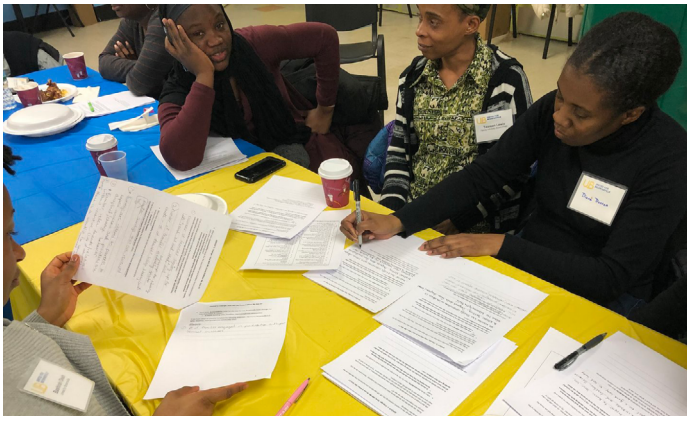
The Power of Community Impact

How Brownsville, Brooklyn, is Making a Difference in Early Literacy

KRISTEN ROCHA ALDRICH



FAB members weigh in on what they would like to see covered in the Family Co-Op curriculum, as well as what they would like to celebrate about Brownsville.

Collective Impact groups focus on bringing different sectors—nonprofits, government organizations, and for-profit companies—together in one neighborhood, city, or community.

The phrase Collective Impact (CI) was officially first mentioned in a 2011 article titled "Collective Impact" in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, and it quickly rose to be one of the most popular philanthropic ideas in the years following.[1] It was also identified by the White House Council for Community Solutions, created by President Barack Obama in 2010, as an important framework for progress on social issues.

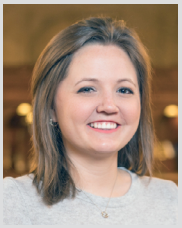
Today, CI may not be one of the most popular buzz terms, but the model itself is still very much alive and continues to impact social change across the country.

CI coalitions take on a variety of forms; however, each CI group focuses on collaborative leadership, with the belief that when different stakeholders in one community create common goals to solve the social issues facing their community, they will create lasting solutions welcomed by those impacted. Traditionally, the people brought together to lead CI alliances are community leaders from organizations such as literacy coalitions, hospitals, clinics, public schools, childcare centers, city councils, social agencies, and public libraries. However, there is a crucial group of people missing from this list—community members.

After working in programming at a public library, it seems unthinkable to plan improvements to a program or space without consulting the people who use the space daily and attend the programs. Libraries do not tell patrons what they want; instead, they engage their patrons to learn what they need from their library and then create programs and spaces based on their feedback. Community engagement is one of the areas public libraries excel in.

New York City is home to several CI efforts with an exemplary example being United for Brownsville (UB), a nonprofit and CI organization based in Brooklyn. UB describes itself as a "collaborative of families and professionals who are improving the early childhood system in Brownsville, Brooklyn."[2]

Core to the creation of UB was the formation of a family advisory board (FAB), which is solely composed of parents and caregivers who live in Brownsville. Soon after the creation of the FAB, UB formed the provider action team (PAT), which is composed of the more traditional CI members, including, but not limited to, healthcare workers, nonprofit organizations, childcare providers, and the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL). UB also invited FAB members to attend this provider network as a way to ensure resident voices are well represented during



Kristen Rocha Aldrich *is the Associate Program Director of Too Small to Fail (TSTF) at the Clinton Foundation. Prior to working with TSTF, she spent over five years at the New York Public Library creating and managing their early childhood education department. She is currently serving as a member of ALSC's Early Childhood Programs and Services committee and is Co-Chair of ALSC's Quicklists Consulting committee.*

collaborative planning activities. UB also has a leadership council (LC) of executives, professors, and field experts who are data driven and focused on supporting and advocating for the FAB and PAT. They support UB by working to troubleshoot bureaucratic barriers and other problems presented to them by the FAB and PAT, but the LC is not a decision-making group.

The FAB and PAT created three main projects in Brownsville to improve early childhood learning (focusing on ages birth to three years old):

1. **Books for Brownsville**, partially lead by BPL, is a service-provider training initiative inspired by Reach Out and Read, a national nonprofit that gives young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric care. Providers who participate in the trainings put the methods developed by Books for Brownsville into practice and distribute books and other family resources to the families they serve. The methods are developed so that providers can seamlessly integrate into their daily routines and will not ask them to do something completely new.

2. **The Family Co-Op** is a two-generational program for infants, toddlers, and their caregivers. It brings free, fun, educationally enriching weekend programming to underutilized spaces. It is inspired by work from Scholastic Education, the Yale Child Study Center, and the community of Grundy County (TN). The Family Co-Op is designed to build skills, reduce the isolation reported by many parents of young children, and counteract negative narratives by starting with the question, "What would you like to celebrate about Brownsville?"

3. **Learning Landscapes** implements the "Talking is Teaching" campaign of Too Small to Fail (TSTF), the early childhood initiative of the Clinton Foundation that promotes early brain and language development by supporting parents and caregivers with tools to talk, read, and sing with their young children from birth. UB creates toolkits using TSTF's early literacy and social emotional development resources, as well as co-creates Brownsville-specific resources that transform everyday places frequented by families from idle spaces into learning and bonding opportunities.

UB will start by launching at two grocery stores in 2019 and look to expand and scale the project by permanently transforming larger structures such as bus stops into engaging, skill-building learning environments. As a Talking is Teaching community, the vision is that the neighborhood itself becomes a landscape for learning.

Through these three projects, UB forges a consensus between providers, residents, and field experts to create sustainable, positive change desired by community residents and providers. Although this approach to CI might take longer, it's intentionality cannot be matched, and it is this intentionality that will best serve the community members.

In your library branch's community, there is likely a CI project making decisions for your patrons. If you're not already involved, it is highly recommended you add your voice to the CI leaders. Not only is it a great way to continue supporting your patrons, it is also a forum for you to connect with other community organizations and residents to help co-solve problems and build connective tissue between organizations that may have been previously siloed.

As a public librarian, there are many ways for you to get involved, and all levels of involvement can make a positive impact. Here are a few ideas:

- Take on a leadership role in the group and help create programming for and by community residents.
- Attend the CI meetings and take notes to share with your patrons.
- Offer to host programs, focus groups and/or meetups at your location.
- Encourage your patrons to become active members of their local CI project.
- Get your CI group to start including residents in their meetings and leadership if they do not already.
- Do all of the above! &

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Stretching STEM

Using Picturebooks to Connect STEM and Literacy

MARY-KATE SABLESKI

STEM is an integral component to today's library programming, engaging children in active, hands-on experiences and building interest in these critical fields. There is a documented dearth of representation across women and minorities in STEM fields, and programming in public libraries can help to close this gap by fostering an early interest in science, technology, engineering, and math in all children, regardless of their background or access to STEM curriculum in school.

Librarians are uniquely poised to develop programs that not only engage students in STEM topics, but also help them develop literacy skills. Librarians are well aware of the need for children to be exposed to books early and often as they grow into independent readers. By bringing together the development of essential literacy skills through read-alouds, vocabulary enrichment, and rich discussion, as well as the exploration of STEM topics through hands-on, immersive experiences, we can capitalize on the varied interests and skills children bring to our storytimes and other programs.

Connecting STEM and literacy through purposeful, meaningful book selection and program planning can help children consider the possibilities of topics they may not naturally gravitate toward, opening up doors and opportunities they may not have otherwise considered.

Purposeful book selection to connect STEM and literacy learning goes beyond simply selecting books to complement a topic, such as reading a book about building design when discussing architecture. Rather, book selection to meaningfully connect STEM and literacy learning involves consideration of the STEM connections, as well as the literary quality and opportunities for vocabulary or comprehension development inherent in the book.

Further, book selection for STEM/literacy connections should consider the "windows and mirrors,"[1] images that both reflect and widen the perspectives of all children. Addressing the underrepresentation of diverse groups in STEM fields requires that children begin to see themselves and others in STEM professions, a function diverse literature can serve. Meaningfully connecting STEM and literacy learning through purposeful book selection and intentional program design will provide these windows and mirrors for children to see the diverse potential in these fields. From there, children can open the "sliding glass door" to engage and envision a future in the rapidly growing STEM professions.[2]

The books described in this article are examples that not only stimulate discussion about STEM topics, but also provide ample opportunities for the development of critical literacy skills. These books, utilized as part of a STEM/literacy afterschool enrichment program for struggling readers, were selected to ignite interest in the topics, while also engaging children in complex vocabulary and story structures.

Mary-Kate Sableski *is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton. She works with teachers to incorporate quality children's literature in their classroom instruction and teaches courses in children's literature to preservice teachers.*

Williams, Karen Lynn. *Galimoto.* Illus. by Catherine Stock. HarperCollins, 1990. 32p.

Kondi is an African child determined to make a "galimoto," a toy vehicle made of wires. Although his brother laughs at the idea, Kondi spends all day gathering wires. By the end of the day, his galimoto is ready to be played with by all of the children in the village. As an example of global literature, this book provides a perspective on the universal experiences of childhood across cultures.

By reading about Kondi's galimoto, children can become inspired to build their own toy using recycled materials. Children can make personal connections to the story and connect their background knowledge to the new understandings about Kondi's culture they gain from reading the story. STEM connections include the engineering design process, mathematical problem solving, and hypothesis testing. Through collaboration and persistence, students can experience the design process from start to finish with an authentic purpose.

Rusch, Elizabeth. *Volcano Rising.* Illus. by Susan Swan. Charlesbridge, 2013. 32p.

This nonfiction book highlights volcanoes through vibrant photography and lyrical language. It describes what happens when a volcano erupts and depicts some historical eruptions.

Children can discuss what they expect to learn about volcanoes before reading the book, based on their prior knowledge. They can compare what their expectations were for the information presented to what they actually learned, helping them add new information to their previous understandings about volcanoes. Once they learn about volcanoes and eruption, students can work together to design a structure that would divert the flow of lava. They can also investigate the properties of lava and explore the geologic connections using supplementary texts and multimedia resources of volcanoes erupting.

Larson, Kirby, and Nethery, Mary. *Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship, and Survival.* Illus. by Jean Cassels. Bloomsbury, 2008. 32p.

Dog, Bobby, and Bob Cat are best friends living in New Orleans. The book follows the two animals' friendship and survival after Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina brought up issues of racial discrimination, and although these issues are not directly addressed in the story, it can act as an entry point into these critical conversations.

This is a rich story with multiple opportunities to connect literacy skills and STEM learning. The animal focus draws young readers in, hooking students into the issues created when hurricanes cause destruction. Children can create character maps of each of the animals, discussing the characteristics that enable them to help each other survive the

hurricane. STEM connections include the meteorological causes of hurricanes, designing structures to rescue stranded victims, and mathematical problem-solving related to time and distance of hurricane travel and effects.

Spires, Ashley. *The Most Magnificent Thing.* Illus. by the author. Kids Can Press, 2014. 32p.

The little girl in the book has a wonderful idea. With the help of her dog, she tries to make the most magnificent thing. While she knows exactly how it will work and how it will look, making the magnificent thing proves to be more difficult than she expected. After failing multiple times, the little girl decides to quit before eventually returning to the project and successfully making the magnificent thing.

Like *Galimoto*, this book offers opportunities for children to be creative and inventive. This book invites the literacy skills of sequencing and retelling, as the reader can trace a clear beginning, middle, and end to the story. STEM connections abound in this book as children are encouraged to develop their own magnificent things, using the engineering design process and collaborative thinking.

Lyon, George Ella. *All the Water in the World.* Illus. by Katherine Tillotson. Simon & Schuster, 2011. 40p.

This book (poetry and nonfiction prose) provides facts about water while teaching about the water cycle and the need for water conservation. The illustrations and word placement complement the information about the water cycle, helping readers make connections.

Engaging children in poetry can involve multiple experiences, including having children read the book chorally, taking turns reading lines of the poem in a performance style, or illustrating specific powerful words from the poem. STEM connections can include a study of the water cycle and water filtration methods. Children can examine methods of water filtration and even try some out on their own using basic materials. Using the engineering design process as a base, children can make connections to water filtration systems around the world and consider how to bring them to places

in need. Discussing places in the world that do not have easy access to clean water can also inspire conversations surrounding diversity and global issues.

Brown, Lisa. *The Airport Book*. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook, 2016. 40p.

This book follows a family at the airport—checking their bags, going through security, and waiting at the gate. At the bottom of each page, the reader follows the young child's missing sock monkey as it makes its own journey through the airport. The book includes representation of diverse groups in the illustrations of the people at the airport.

The STEM connections in this book are fun to create because of the powerful "hook" created by the book. The book is engaging to young children, as they can trace the sock monkey's journey through the airport. Multiple storylines are happening in this book, with the monkey's journey occurring at the bottom of the pages, the family navigating the airport, and the background characters included on each page. Librarians can engage children in a multimodal reading of the text, in which they examine how the illustrations and the text work together to tell the story.

From a STEM perspective, children can consider the various components of an airport, including the conveyer belt, the security scanner, and the science of flight. Using the engineering design process, students can consider how to create a conveyer belt out of everyday materials to understand how this design works.

Beaty, Andrea. *Iggy Peck, Architect*. Illus. by David Roberts. Abrams, 2007. 32p.

Iggy Peck is a second grade student who loves to design and create. However, when his teacher declares her dislike of architecture, Iggy faces a challenge. Thankfully, a class field trip proves to everyone just how useful an architect is. The book includes limited representation of diversity, but does incorporate both female and male perspectives on a traditionally male-dominated field.

Iggy Peck is a compelling, relatable character. Children can ask questions as they read and learn about architecture, modeling and practicing the reading strategy of asking questions to monitor comprehension. Architecture provides numerous STEM connections. Children can explore the career of architecture, considering all of the skills involved in pursuing this career. They can also engage in making blueprints, drawing designs for buildings and structures of their creation.

Prince, April Jones. *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing*. Illus. by Francois Roca. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 32p.

Once the Brooklyn Bridge, which connects Brooklyn and New York City, was completed, everyone wanted to know just how much it could hold. To prove how strong it was, Phineas T. Barnum paraded twenty-one elephants across the span.

This book is a good example of the historical fiction genre. The illustrations are rich and inviting, and students can use their multimodal skills in a complete reading. Children can draw themselves into the historical scene, considering the role they would have liked to have played in the building of the bridge to make connections to the story. This is an ideal book to explore bridge design using the engineering design process. Using building materials such as K'Nex, children can build bridges, then test them using weights. Children can also examine bridges around the world to study how they were designed.

Van Dusen, Chris. *If I Built a House*. Illus. by the author. Dial, 2012. 32p.

Jack "builds" a house of his dreams that includes a racetrack, flying room, and a gigantic slide. Jack has limitless creativity and an imagination that allows him to design a house anyone would love.

With a wonderful entry into childlike imagination, this book will inspire children to see, build, and create. The endpapers invite an examination of blueprint design, and children can draw their own blueprints for their "house of dreams." Using everyday materials, children can build a house while learning how to balance their dreams with the realities of building design. Children can even see if their houses would withstand the elements, in a "three little pigs" style, using wind and water to test their structures.

Thompson, Laurie Ann. *Emmanuel's Dream*. Illus. by Sean Qualls. Schwartz & Wade, 2015. 40p.

This book tells the story of Emmanuel Yeboah, a man born with a disability in a small village in Africa. Emmanuel dreams of biking across Africa with only his one strong leg. With great determination, he is able to do just that. The book shows that having a disability does not mean that a person is unable to reach their greatest dreams. In addition, this book connects with *Galimoto* by telling a global story of diversity.

With an authentic purpose built right into the story, this book allows children to consider the real-world problem of navigating an able-bodied world with a physical disability. Children can brainstorm tasks that would be challenging for people with limited mobility, then work together to design supports to address these challenges. For example, putting on a sock is challenging for those with limited arm function, so students can use everyday materials to design a grabber hook to help pull the sock on to the foot. The engineering design process takes center stage as children identify and work together to address real-world problems.

Bailey, Linda. *Stanley at Sea*. Illus. by Bill Slavin. Kids Can Press, 2008. 32p.

This book tells the story of Stanley, a dog who is always hungry and whose owners always seem to be eating. One day, Stanley wanders down to the river where he meets canines Alice, Nutsy, and Gassy Jack. Soon their keen noses lead them to a delicious treat on a small boat with no people in sight. When the boat's mooring comes loose, the boat floats away with the dogs still on board! The book follows the dogs' adventure as they try to get back to land.

This engaging story brings children into the back door of a STEM challenge. Numerous examples of characterization, dialogue, and predictive opportunities occur throughout the story. For children who are reluctant or uncertain of engaging in STEM activities, this book can encourage and challenge. Using the engineering design process, they can design a rescue aid to reach Stanley and bring him safely home.

Hooks, Gwendolyn. *Tiny Stitches*. Illus. by Colin Bootman. Lee & Low, 2016. 32p.

This book tells the story of Vivien Thomas, a young black man who dreamed of becoming a doctor. After losing his savings in the stock market crash of 1929, Vivien took a job at Vanderbilt University under Dr. Alfred Blalock. Vivien knew that the all-white university would not admit him as a student, but he hoped working with the doctor would get him closer to his dream. Based on his research and experiments as Blalock's research assistant, Vivien developed a procedure that was used for the first successful open-heart surgery on a child. This book directly addresses issues of diversity in a historical context.

As a complex story based in a historical context, this book presents opportunities for story mapping and determining the central theme. Key vocabulary terms related to the medical field are also important to discuss throughout the story. The STEM connections in this book can relate to the tools used in surgery, in which students can develop a surgical instrument to be used in delicate surgeries. Students can explore related career connections in medicine, not limited to becoming surgeons, and consider the skills and experiences they would need to pursue these careers. Using the engineering design process, children can ponder building a tool for various surgical situations.

Holub, Joan. *The Knights Before Christmas*. Illus. by Scott Magoon. Holt, 2015. 32p.

This book, in poetry form, tells the story of three brave knights who were just settling in for the night on December 24 when out on the drawbridge, there arose such a clatter! The knights work together to try and get rid of the invader, Santa Claus, a "red-and white knight," and his eight dragons.

Predictive opportunities abound in the book as children consider what will happen at each stage. From a STEM perspective, children can explore the science of catapults, considering how to help Santa Claus get the presents into the castle. &

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Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

Seattle's "Loud at the Library" Collaboration

CIKEITHIA PUGH AND BROOKE DOYLE

Mom Marimirca Jean-Baptiste and her infant daughter take a break at a Loud @ the Library event.

Public libraries know their storytime programs serve patrons' early learning needs; however, questions arise as libraries feel a sense of urgency to address equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) issues.

How can our storytimes attract a more diverse audience? How can we build a collection that represents our community? Is it enough if our shelves feature more authors of color and our storytime attendance climbs?

Efforts toward greater equity are deeply rooted in understanding the distinct needs of communities and the institutional will to change. Leading for equity focuses on outcomes and not outputs. Success is not measured by how many people attend a program. Record storytime attendance numbers tell us nothing about the quality of the experience. Instead we need to think about the outcomes. What has changed as a result of the experience? Is the program aligned with the expressed interest of the community? Are members of the community likely to attend future programs?

Relationships are at the center of our work, and in the absence of those connections, we make assumptions about the interests and emerging needs of communities. This results in practices that continue to tell the same story and imply institutions know what is best instead of listening directly to those we wish to serve.

The work of EDI (see sidebar on page 29 for definitions) is often challenging and evolves over time. Authentic community engagement is about sharing power and focuses on relationships. The Seattle Public Library (SPL) has explored new paths in pursuit of racial equity, and the lessons learned provide insights for all libraries.

Institutions often mistake access and inclusion for equity. Many libraries provide diverse communities access to services and programs that the library *has already designed*. To reach equity, institutions must share power by forming relationships with people who have not had a seat at the table before and begin to listen to new voices. What emerges from those relationships informs the design of library programs and services.

Pathway for Equitable Programming

Community engagement provides many opportunities to cultivate new relationships. Traditionally, libraries' approach to developing programming has been limited to internal discussions and planning, but this excludes some critical voices. Communities are dynamic and ever changing. We must start by taking a close look at our common practices in relation to

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our communities. This simple action is an important beginning step in leading for equity in our libraries. The Pathway for Equitable Programming is a useful tool in this work.[1]

Let's move from theoretical to practical—how does leading for equity look on the ground? We share the illuminating example of community engagement efforts at SPL that led to the creation of a new storytime program, Loud at the Library.

Identify Local Priorities

SPL implemented a community listening initiative that focused on regional outreach efforts as part of the library's larger Community Engagement Service Priority. The goals were to build connections with individuals and organizations, learn more about existing programs and events in communities, as well as listen for future ideas for library programs.

Those listening sessions highlighted a need and interest for early learning experiences for parents and young children who were receiving home visiting services from the library. Service providers expressed a desire to introduce families to libraries and their available programs and services.

Gather Information

Libraries are obvious hubs for information and have access to many data resources that add detail to our understanding of a community. However, it is important to investigate what the data is not telling us. What other questions should we be asking internally? Where are the gaps in the sources? What questions do we still have after our analysis? The institutional practice of solely relying on a particular source for more information about a community limits our ability to understand fully the complexity of experiences.

Historically, data has been used to justify the development of policies and practices that disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities. Traditional data sources must be balanced with community-led data. SPL had access to all sorts of demographic data about languages spoken and household income for an area, but it did not reveal the patterns and experiences of the residents.

Build Relationships

By spending time at local public health clinics, SPL staff learned about the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), a home-visiting service that was already doing great work and had established relationships with their clients at the clinics. The NFP was able to add detail to the demographic data from the library; the nurses shared that the families in their program did not have a connection to the library. The need was clear.

SPL and NFP staff met to brainstorm ideas for an early learning program to introduce parents and young children to the library.

After several meetings, the first Loud at the Library event was designed and held at the Columbia branch to introduce new families to the library. The library and the Partnership had time to build their working relationship and develop a variety of parent-child activities to pilot with the families.

Plan Services

SPL and the NFP collaboratively came up with the clever name Loud at the Library—families did not need to worry about having quiet, orderly babies when they came for their introduction. Families were encouraged to come as they were; the name also sent a subtle message to library staff that families were welcome as they were.

Each partner identified available resources to support the program and worked together to define roles. SPL offered meeting space, early literacy resources, and a storytime program. The NFP focused on the nutritional component by selecting healthy snacks for the family and led a "make and take" activity at each session. Most important, the nurses' trusted relationships with the families enrolled in the home-visiting program was vital to encouraging them to attend the event. With no established connections to the community, program promotion by the library would have been difficult.

The Loud at the Library Program Plan

- **Welcome, Introductions, Social Time, Snack**
  - Open-ended play
  - Storytime led by library staff
  - Optional parent-led storytelling, such as sharing stories and songs from childhood memory in their language.
- **Parent Circle**—Social time for connecting with library staff and nurses. Staff could share community events and resources and learn more about what topics interest them.
- **Library Orientation**—including tours, card signups, and staff meet-and-greet.

Deliver Services

The first Loud at the Library program had only two families, but library staff considered two to be a success! It was the beginning of a trusting partnership where families could feel welcome and learn about the library. For the second program, the NFP offered more reminders, made personal phone

calls, and assured clients that familiar faces they knew from the NFP would be there. The nurses did a lot of one-on-one engagement and encouragement to assure their clients that they would receive something for coming, that it would be fun, and that food and door prizes were offered. The second session had eight attendees. The program grew from those two events to six programs annually.

Evaluate Services

The families, the library, and the nurses reflected throughout the process on what was working and what needed to change. The desired outcome identified on the joint logic model and evaluation plan was simply that NFP families feel welcome in the library. Survey analysis as well as anecdotal evidence indicate outcomes were met.

Some parents wanted to lead activities or share a skill (for example, bilingual parents wanting to co-present a storytime), which was an unanticipated but wonderful outcome. Parents began to co-design the program; at one program, for example, a parent taught the group yoga. In the future, the library program manager would like to become technical support as the parents and branch staff own the program—the dream is to offer compensation to the parents who are co-leading.

Leading for equity and authentic community engagement takes time. SPL began its community listening process in May 2016, and the first Loud at the Library program was offered in August. Now, Loud at the Library is a robust part of the library's offerings, but it took patience.

Think about the community groups in your service area with which your library has not developed relationships. Focus on building relationships with those communities. You will need to show up again and again and build trust over time. Find the trusted community organizations and work with them to build true partnerships where power is shared. &

To learn more, visit WebJunction's free Supercharged Storytimes self-paced course (https://oc.lc/supercharged-course). Module 5 led by CiKeithia Pugh focuses on Storytimes through an Equity Lens. The module includes many rich resources such as a Library Walkthrough Checklist among others.

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Clarifying Equity

Building a shared understanding of equity helps to construct an internal framework that informs our work. Making the distinction between equity, diversity, and inclusion is important so that we're clear about how we apply the terms to our work.

- **Equity** is another way of saying fairness and justice. Think of equity as not simply something to aspire to; for equity to be achieved and sustained, it needs to be considered a structural and systemic concept.[1]
- **Diversity** includes all the ways people differ, and it includes all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It recognizes everyone and every group as valuable. The term is often used to include aspects of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, and much more. There can be plenty of diversity without equity.[2]
- **Inclusion** means bringing traditionally excluded individuals and groups into activities and decision-making.

Only focusing on diversity and inclusion is shortsighted. Leading for equity allows us to move from a one-size-fits-all approach to focusing on how to close gaps and provide opportunity and power to traditionally marginalized communities.

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We Are Kenosha!

A Grassroots Passive Program Fueled by an EJK Grant

HEATHER THOMPSON

One patron's view of what their city means to them.

Inspiration struck, as it usually does, during a conference presentation. Though the specifics of the presentation (which presenters, library, and even the conference itself) are lost to now-defunct electronics, I know that the idea for my Ezra Jack Keats (EJK) Mini-Grant proposal originated in that moment.

The presenters spoke about their library having tons of old catalog cards just sitting around, taking up space. They repurposed the cards by having patrons draw and paint on them. If memory serves, hundreds (or maybe thousands) of beautified cards were later exhibited at the library. I loved this idea. Loved it. But my library did not have old catalog cards. So I stashed the idea in the back of my mind—the place where all fabulous conference ideas live—until I could make it work.

Along came an application for the EJK Mini-Grant. Every year, the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation offers up to seventy mini-grants, up to $500 each, which fund a variety of creative, collaborative projects. Materials purchased with grant money may only be used for carrying out the project and are not intended for extended use. For example, the money should be used for consumables like art supplies, not the easels that will be used in your library's art programs for the next ten years. Additionally, the program should not receive extra funding from your library, school, or other outside sources.

From the long-since-stashed conference idea to the mini-grant application, the We Are Kenosha project was born.

The Lake Michigan shoreline city of Kenosha is situated in the southeastern-most part of Wisconsin, directly between Milwaukee and Chicago. Though the city has a population of just under 100,000, the Kenosha Public Library (KPL) boasts four branches and a bookmobile. In 2018, Youth and Family Services staff held 1,348 programs with a total attendance of 56,807. Clearly, we are a busy bunch of bibliophiles.

Despite the library's popularity, only 50 percent of Kenosha's residents hold a library card. As a public library, we are able to learn about what our existing patrons want and need from the materials they request, the programs they attend, and the services they use.

But what about the other half of our residents who may not come to our libraries or do not have a library card? How do we learn who they are and what they value? In an effort to expand our collective bubble, the We Are Kenosha project aimed to give residents an opportunity to meet their neighbors through visual art and self-expression.

The project itself was simple. We distributed 3" x 5" index cards, markers, multicultural crayons, colored pencils, and pencil sharpeners in plastic shoebox-sized containers to partner sites throughout the community. Each site also

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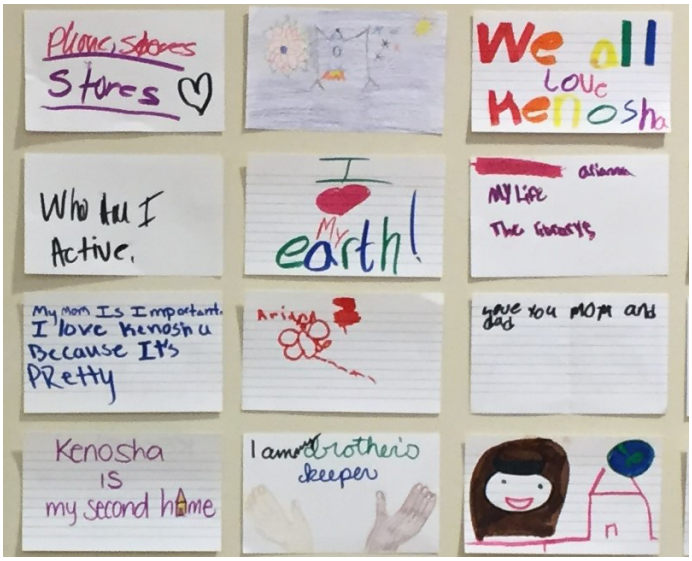


A sampling of what residents said they love about Kenosha.

received a collection box (donated by Uline) and instructional sign. The sign read:

> Participate in the Kenosha Public Library's community-wide art project! Simply draw or write a response to one of the following questions and drop it in the box below:
> - Who are you?
> - What is important to you?
> - What do you love about Kenosha?
> - Draw a self-portrait. Write an ode to Kenosha's lakefront. You're only limited by your imagination!

Invitations to host a box were extended to twenty-seven sites, but only sixteen boxes ended up out in the community. Sites included colleges, religious organizations, school district offices, a senior center, a county detention center, and more. A box was also placed at each library branch and on the bookmobile. Host sites were welcome to place the box wherever they felt it would engage the most people. They could move it around or take it on the road to special events. All boxes remained at the sites for approximately two-and-a-half months.

Afterward, the boxes were collected and response cards were digitized. The scanned images went into a photo album on KPL's Facebook page. This was so that anybody, anywhere in the world, could view the results of this art project. Response cards were also displayed as a mural in the lobby of the Southwest Library, which gets approximately thirty thousand visitors per month. Included in the mural were signs explaining the We Are Kenosha project. The mural remained on display for several months. All remaining index cards, art supplies, and plastic storage boxes were given to after-school care sites in the community.

I had large-scale hopes for this project. This is evidenced by my purchase of 28,800 index cards. Ultimately, we received 250 responses—a much lower rate of participation than desired and anticipated.

Though I believed that a passive, informal approach to this project would work best for encouraging those who say they're "not good at art" to participate, the opposite was true. The greatest number of responses came from the box that sat on the children's reference desk at our largest branch—probably because we were always there to verbally encourage participation.

I realized that it is easy to overlook a passive activity in a non-library space. Such activities rarely exist in businesses and non-library community organizations. Perhaps those who saw the boxes were too busy to participate, didn't think it was "for them," simply did not see it, or just didn't want to participate. It seems that without active encouragement, the activity garnered little participation.

That sounds like the project failed, doesn't it? On the contrary! We Are Kenosha was a success in many ways.

For starters, more than two hundred people participated. It might not be the 28,800 people I imagined, but it was still a significant number. The responses represented diverse ages, interests, political and religious beliefs, ethnicities, languages spoken, difficulties, and life circumstances. The responses reflected a common love for the natural beauty of Kenosha's beaches and Lake Michigan.

I realized that it is easy to overlook a passive activity in a non-library space. Such activities rarely exist in businesses and non-library community organizations. Perhaps those who saw the boxes were too busy to participate, didn't think it was "for them," simply did not see it, or just didn't want to participate. It seems that without active encouragement, the activity garnered little participation.

There was also appreciation shown for families, as well as the friendly people, good schools, and excellent community services in Kenosha. The overarching theme of the responses was one of love, peace, and positivity. It was heartening to see close-knit commonalities among respondents who were so different. Through this project, we heard from and learned about citizens that we do not typically reach, such as residents at the Kenosha County Detention Center. The We Are Kenosha project allowed our citizens to share beautiful and personally meaningful artwork, thoughts, and beliefs with others across the city, state, and country. Additionally, the library connected with sixteen community organizations with whom we will continue to partner in the future.

In the end, the response was small, but the impact was large. Libraries have the extraordinary power to bring together people of all backgrounds. So search through the conference or continuing-education storage closet in the back of your brain.

Which idea can you bring out into the light that might build a new bridge to people in your community? &

To learn more about Ezra Jack Keats Mini-Grants, visit www.ezra-jack-keats.org/h/about-mini-grants.

Couples Who Collaborate

Shannon and Dean Hale

MARY-KATE SABLESKI

Shannon and Dean Hale. Photo by Jenn Florence.

Shannon and Dean Hale are the dynamic team behind the popular Princess in Black series. This series currently includes eight books, with more books slated to come. In addition to Princess in Black, Shannon and Dean have collaborated on the Squirrel Girl novels (2018), *Calamity Jack* (2010), *Rapunzel's Revenge* (2008), and *The Legend of Shadow High* (2017).

Shannon is a prolific writer who has been writing books since the age of ten. A Newbery Honor winner for *Princess Academy* (2005), Shannon has written more than twenty books for young audiences, including her graphic novel memoirs, *Real Friends* (2017) and *Best Friends* (2019). *Austenland* (2007), a book for adult audiences, is also a major motion picture. Dean is newer to writing, having recently left a career in technology to write full-time. His credits include a picture book, *Scapegoat* (2011), and his collaborations with Shannon. Both Shannon and Dean are always working on new projects, both individually and together.

Shannon and Dean have been married for nineteen years. They live in Salt Lake City, Utah, with their four children. Their interview explores their creative process, the role their books play in children's lives, and how their work reflects our diverse society.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your work together.

SH: Going way, way back, our first collaboration was a graphic novel around 2004. I was really seeing a lack of books for certain kinds of readers. Dean grew up reading comics, and there really weren't comics for kids. At that time, there really weren't any accessible books for kids in that format, and I thought for visual learners and certain kinds of kids it would be a lifesaver, like it had been for Dean. So, we wanted to write one, and Dean was working full-time at another job, and I think I was too, actually.

We wanted to write one together because his breadth of knowledge about comics was so great. I had a lot of respect for the medium, but I didn't have a lot of experience in it, so I thought that we needed to collaborate together, since I was mostly a novel writer. So, that's when it first started, and we found that we liked writing together.

DH: In terms of a timeline, if it was beyond one year ago, it all blends into one thing. *Calamity Jack* (2010) was after that, wasn't it?

SH: Yes, then we took a break because you were working full-time and we were having more and more kids, and it was just getting hard to collaborate, so we didn't write together for a few years. Until . . .

DH: Until I quit my job.

Mary-Kate Sableski *is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton, where she teaches courses in children's literature and literacy methods. Her main areas of research interest include diversity in children's literature and struggling readers.*

SH: I think you were still working while we wrote Princess in Black. I do think it was after Princess in Black.

DH: Yes, I was working when we wrote the first three Princess in Black books.

SH: The first four. It was really hard to collaborate with the kids and the work schedules and everything, but for Princess in Black we were both so excited about it. The idea was really sparked by our four-year-old who made the comment that princesses don't wear black, and as soon as Dean got home from work, I was like "A princess in black!" and he said "Yes!"

SH: With our kids at home, we knew exactly what kind of book we wanted to write. With that idea, we could have done a graphic novel, or we could have done a middle-grade novel, but there was a real lack of transitional chapter books in our household, and we were desperate for them. That's why we chose that particular format.

Eventually, I wrote the first Ever After High book and they wanted me to write three more on a pretty tight timeline. So, I asked, "Is it ok if my husband writes with me?" and they said "Sure!" so I called him at work and said, "Put in your two weeks, hon, and come home and write with me."

It was because of Ever After High that we were able to do that; before then we didn't make enough to be able to support a family through writing, so that was a real blessing. Then once he was home, our schedules were more aligned, and we got to write more together.

Q: How did you two meet?

DH: We have known each other longer than we haven't.

SH: We were friends for eleven years and were friends or dating for eleven years, we were friends from high school, and were part of the same group of friends.

DH: Yeah, you were sixteen? I can't remember.

SH: I was fifteen. You were sixteen, so I mean gosh it's a long time, that's thirty years if I am doing addition right. I had a crush on him for a long time. We didn't want to get too serious too fast, I remember being younger and thinking I'm going to marry him but I don't want to get married right away, so I remember pushing him away thinking, it's too soon. We didn't really start dating until our twenties.

DH: Then after high school we were never in the same state.

Q: You probably never expected to be writing books together someday!

SH: I never expected to be a writer; it was just a side dream; we never talked about collaborating, and that was never something that crossed our minds.

Q: Dean, you have some experience reading comics, but did you ever think you would be a writer?

DH: I always felt like I wanted to, but I didn't really think it was possible, it was like wanting to be an astronaut you know, or a wizard, like this is something that would be super awesome but not really in the cards realistically, and I thought that even after Shannon had many books published.

I have never been particularly good at long-term follow through, which means I have dozens of books half-finished, but everything I've collaborated on with Shannon I've finished.

SH: What's the common denominator in all that?

Q: One always needs an accountability partner in any relationship.

SH: I am the finisher.

Q: As a couple, how does the editing process back and forth go?

DH: I like to say, and this is a quote from Shannon, that she has to remind herself that we are writing a first draft.

SH: I have to remind myself that I am shoveling the sand into the box so that later I can build the castle. It's a meme now.

DH: Right, and I mostly shovel sand, just the contractor.

SH: It is good honest work.

DH: I provide the granite and she shaves it off.

SH: I really am the reviser and that just comes from more years of experience. Revising is tough, and it really takes a certain eye and a certain amount of experience to be able to see what should and shouldn't be there, but we work together really closely. It starts off with, and he hates this, but, we do have to be in the same room when we are outlining and breaking the story.

DH: I prefer when we do the long walks and we are holding hands.

SH: Like a retirement commercial! I don't like going out in the winter, I don't like being cold. If the season is right, we will do a lot of our outlining taking walks. When you collaborate, its more work up front than normal. You really have to have the whole thing outlined chapter by chapter—exactly what's happening in each one. So, we do a tremendous amount of work and labor before we ever start writing, much more than when I am writing alone. Once we've got an outline, we split it up and each of use takes the chapter that we are most excited about. We write different chapters, and then we "Frankenstein" it all together and see what we've got, and that's when I do most of the revisions. Then, we pick up the kids from school.

SH: I would not do it with someone else in this manner; I can't believe we pulled it off, honestly, and its only because we know each other so well. I mean, I couldn't just jump in like this with someone else . . . It is tricky and it takes more time to collaborate than to do it alone, but the benefit of it is that you get this energy of two people, and can come up with some really cool stuff. In *Princess in Black*, Dean came up with the line "twinkle, twinkle, little smash," which has such a focus in that one line. It's so good.

DH: I've earned my keep.

SH: He is so smart with certain things, like even if I'm the main person revising, if I get stuck somewhere, he is such an idea person from the decades of comic reading. I will just lean on him, whether I need a new plot idea, or if I need a new name of something, I will just ask him. It's always so fun.

Q: How does the collaboration process work?

SH: So, when we are outlining, we are both pitching ideas back and forth, so by the time the outline is down there is no way to tell who thought of what, and we are also building off of each other's ideas, and even in terms of exact lines, we are never really sure of that either, because there is enough revision, so it's really hard to know who wrote what pieces. We know who wrote the first draft of a particular chapter, but the other person gets all over it by the time it comes out.

Dean does revise, just not as much as I do. I prefer this process because it's really nice for it to feel like it's one whole unit and not, "this is your part, this is my part." I talked with a couple who collaborated one time, a husband and wife team who collaborated on a book, and they had a process in which they go into a document and when they think that there is a part that their partner had written that they think needs to be changed, they will write in parentheses, "you know, I think this line needs to be tweaked or something or maybe you don't need this paragraph," and I was like, are you kidding?! That would just take so much time just to read it. Just do it! I couldn't imagine if I had to tiptoe around emotions and worry about hurt feelings.

Q: So there are no hurt feelings?

DH: Sometimes I will write stuff that I know will not make it.

SH: Yeah, we both do that with little things in a draft because we know it will make the other person laugh, even though it's not going to work in the story. Which is fun, just put some little nuggets for the other person. Honestly to tell you the truth, if there have been hurt feelings in the past then I have no memory of it.

Q: Has winning the Newbery Honor influenced your working relationship together, knowing that one of you has won that honor?

DH: She says that all the time, "Well, which one of us has won the Newbery Honor?"

SH: It comes up anytime we have a disagreement, "Did you win a Newbery Honor? No?" But really, I don't think so, it's actually been so long now, that was 2006.

DH: That's just the relationship we have.

SH: I don't think it has anything to do with the award.

DH: It's just who you are.

SH: Yeah, I'm the finisher. I have the personality type. What works for me is to tie my sense of self-worth directly into finishing a book, so if I want to feel good about myself then I have to finish it. I don't think the doctors would recommend that, but it's helped me be prolific.

Q: When you share your books with your children, and other children, what are the reactions of both groups of kids?

SH: Our kids really are involved before the books come out. We use them as much as possible as an in-house editing system. Our now fifteen-year-old, since he was maybe about eleven, would read all of mine and all of our manuscripts and give notes, and he would even suggest funny lines. He has a great sense of humor. Our twelve-year-old really loves graphic novels, and she has been into memoirs, so *Real Friends*, which is pretty cool.

Q: They probably see your books everywhere!

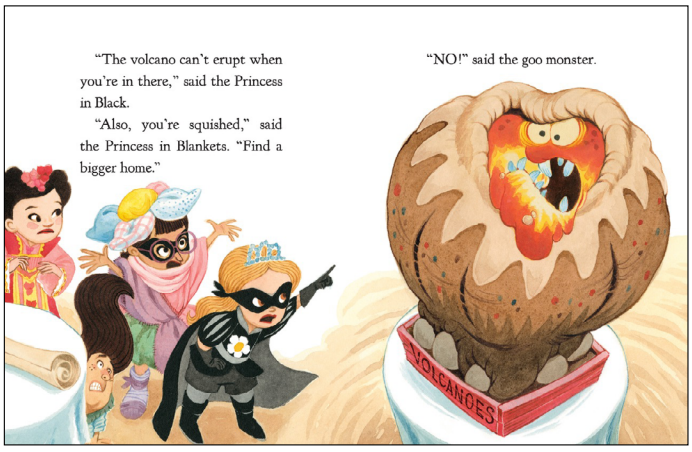
SH: Yes, and they have friends who are fans, and I think sometimes she wants some separation, she wants us to just be mom and dad, which is fine.

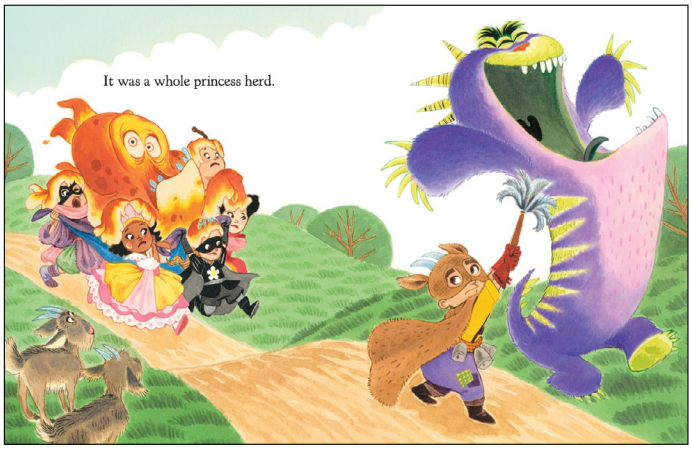
DH: They did help us with some of the princess hero names, which was good.

SH: They did for the upcoming princess heroes. It has been really nice. So our last two are twins, so for the last four years we have had these two little girls who are the perfect age for it in house. That honestly has been really helpful in thinking about what the kids care about at this age. And we see them and their little friends, so we are just really immersed in kids of that age, whether we are out doing book presentations or just at home. Every once in a while, I will give myself a check when we are starting to write something that we think is funny, and I think, will they think this is funny? Sometimes, we think, "well, no they wouldn't, they wouldn't get that joke, they wouldn't care about that—let's refocus." We sometimes start getting too fussy, and then we arrange things, and realize that's unnecessary, let's bring it back to what kids would say, what kids would do. They keep us grounded.

Q: How might your books appeal to both boys and girls, even though in Princess in Black, a girl is the main character?

SH: I always like to point people to my *Washington Post* article.[1] When we came up with the idea for Princess in Black, besides wanting more transitional chapter books, another reason we wanted to do the book for that age group was because I knew from experience that boys don't care if a book is about a boy or a girl when they are younger. They have to be taught to be ashamed of that, whether from subtle hints made by adults or outright shaming from adults and peers.





Interior art from *The Princess in Black and the Science Fair Scare* (2019). Text copyright © 2018 by Shannon and Dean Hale. Illustrations copyright © 2018 by LeUyen Pham. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA.

By third grade, it can be really hard to get them back because they have been spending so many years being told these things, but if you can get them at preschool and kindergarten to fall in love with a really fun adventure story that happens to be about a girl, then it can be harder as they grow older for them to buy in to the ideology that boys can't enjoy books about girls; they have already proven that not to be true. I think it is really important that boys get to read books about girls, because reading is one of the most profound ways that we develop empathy for people different from us.

Q: Upcoming projects to talk about, besides Princess in Black?

DH: We just wrote the first middle-grade Wonder Woman graphic novel.

SH: Yes, this is exciting, and that will be out next year. The illustrator is Victoria Ying.

She is on an island of all women. Our book takes place entirely on Themyscira because its Wonder Woman, age eleven, and she has never left Themyscira. She is the only child, and everybody else is an adult, immortal woman. So, it really doesn't get into gender at all.

It's really the story of what it is like to be the only child in a community where everybody else has achieved perfection. You are this kid, still trying to learn. I love that Dean and I wrote it together!

DH: I do, too!

SH: I think it is really nice to get a male and female voice together presenting this story. I do think that, although this is a sign of inherent sexism, I do think it can be easier for some people to take a story of a girl if a man wrote it or a man is involved. That makes me sad, that is a clear sign about discounting women, just like disguising their first name as initials; we know that to be the case.

I have a lot of stories about the sexism I have experienced as an author. I have had a couple of male authors who write books about girls call me on it and tell me that that couldn't be because they write books about girls and they haven't experienced that. And I say, that's because you are a man and it really is. There is a difference in a book about a girl written by a woman and a book about a girl written by a man.

A book about a girl written by a woman is perceived as being only for girls, and a book by a man, whether it is about a girl or a boy, is written for everybody. It is the idea that women only have specific stories for their gender, and men's stories are universal. I don't love that it's the truth, but it's the current ideology that we are trying to undo.

But I do think it helps to have Dean up there and have us sitting side by side presenting together saying this is OK, we like the same stories, I'm a woman and he is a man, and that's OK. &

Reference

1. Shannon Hale, "What Are We Teaching Boys When We Discourage Them from Reading Books about Girls?," *The Washington Post*, October 10, 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/parents-and-teachers-please-stop-discouraging-boys-from-reading-books-about-girls/2018/10/09/f3eaaca6-c820-11e8-b1ed-1d2d65b86d0c_story.html?utm_term=.ea540660cdcd.

Advocacy and Building Relationships

Nate Halsan

Nate Halsan *is a Youth Services Librarian at the central branch of the Sacramento (CA) Public Library and is the current Co-Chair of ALSC's Advocacy and Legislation Committee.*

I've worked as a children's librarian for five years. Over the last two, I've served with ALSC's Advocacy and Legislation Committee. Yet I have to admit, I am still learning the role of a librarian advocate. I'll be honest, it often feels overwhelming, and I am not sure that feeling will ever dissipate.

There is a lot to think about. From local to state and federal stakeholders, I sometimes feel my perch at the kid's desk isn't the place where real advocacy happens. How can I rally support for libraries at all levels? It's not just a question for a librarian who serves on an advocacy committee. I am sure it's a question we all ask ourselves.

For now, I'll keep it simple and highlight the fact that we advocate library services every day. We do it through the relationships we build with families. We do it from our desks, in community centers, and schools. This is advocacy we do without thinking about it. It's become obvious to me that advocacy, at its core, is the building of relationships.

That realization really hit it home for me. It's helped me become more intentional in my everyday advocacy. Relationship-building is an essential aspect of our work with children and their families. We provide excellent customer service (although many of us may not wish to call it that). We spend time getting to know our readers, their interests, and their needs.

We engage families in play and model good early learning practices. We assist children and their caregivers in frantic searches for books about specific frogs or birds or sharks or dinosaurs. And we love doing it!

Think about how most of those interactions end. The family leaves with a sense of satisfaction and the knowledge that the library is a resource that works for them.

Do they come back? Not always, but they often do. One thing is for sure, your attention to their needs provided for an experience that deepened their confidence in the library. It may have even positively influenced their future support.

This is important because these families are our stakeholders. Building relationships with them matters. This is a vital part of the larger advocacy picture. Wow! We're feeling less overwhelmed, right?

Indeed, ALSC speaks to the process of building relationships with stakeholders through its Everyday Advocacy initiative (www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy). I know, sometimes the language is geared toward policymakers. That's important. Today, I'd like to challenge us to consider relationship-building within the framework of the families we serve.

So let's start now: be visible and remain attentive. Here are some tips, modified from Everyday Advocacy and focused on the families you serve.

Start now. It's never too late. Introduce yourself to each family you meet. Reintroduce yourself the next time. Learn about their interests and their

needs and be responsive to them. Always remember that gaining their trust will take time, and that's OK.

Be visible and show up for your community. Say hello. We do this all the time at schools and community centers, cultural events, and daycares. I mean, we even do this while grocery shopping or grabbing coffee outside of work.

Be attentive. Listen to the families you serve—they know best what their needs are. It takes practice and isn't easy, but it's integral to building trust with our families, gaining their public support, and the ongoing success of our profession. We can always learn to do it better.

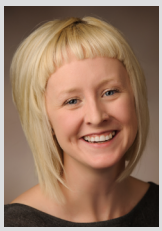
The process of becoming a librarian advocate will probably never be complete. We'll have to take risks and learn to better connect with policy stakeholders at many governmental levels. We'll stare down that slightly more daunting task; we can lean into our strengths and be intentional with the way we build relationship with the families we serve every day. It's advocacy, too, and it makes a huge impact. &

This article refers to the ALSC Everyday Advocacy Initiative and was inspired by their tools for Engaging Community. You can check it out at ala.org/everyday-advocacy/engage.

Index to Advertisers

The Power of a Mindful Moment

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Katie Scherrer



Betsy Diamant-Cohen *is a children's librarian with a doctorate who loves to present workshops for educators, programs for children and families, and presentations at conferences.* ***Katie Scherrer*** *is the founder of Stories, Songs, and Stretches!, an early-learning startup working to ensure all kids are school-ready in body, heart, and mind.*

Mindfulness, a practice of intentionally connecting with the present moment as it is, is finally taking root in libraries. Practiced for millennia, mindfulness has long been recognized by the business community as a critical leadership skill. Academic libraries have taken the lead in melding mindfulness and librarianship, as evidenced by the boom in designated academic library space for quiet mindfulness practice and the 2015 publication of *The Mindful Librarian: Connecting the Practice of Mindfulness to Librarianship*.[1]

Mindfulness is a muscle we build through consistent practice, much like we build physical muscles by regularly lifting weights. As we build the muscle of mindfulness, we may notice more calm and optimism in our lives because we are relating to the world differently, with less reactivity. What an incredible skill for children to develop at a young age!

Public librarians serving youth are beginning to experiment with simple strategies for incorporating mindfulness into their work with children and families, and an abundance of titles for children on this topic have emerged in the last several years. The resources highlighted in this article are presented to help curious librarians learn more about mindfulness, develop their personal mindfulness practice, understand how mindfulness can benefit the families they serve, and begin experimenting with embedding mindful moments into their work with children.

Mindfulness and Trauma

Perhaps one of the most powerful benefits of mindfulness is the positive way it can impact—at both neurophysiological and behavioral levels—those who have been affected by trauma, including children experiencing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), long known to be indicators of physical, mental, and relational difficulties in adulthood. The Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Foundation provides an easy-to-understand explanation of the relationship between ACEs, neuroplasticity, and mindfulness in the article "Trauma-Informed Care, Neuroplasticity and Mindfulness."[2]

Two recent scientific articles that explore mindfulness, trauma, and early childhood more thoroughly are available from the National Institutes of Health. An extensive literature review published in *Children* in 2017 found that "high-quality, structured mindfulness instruction may mitigate the negative effects of stress and trauma related to adverse childhood exposures, improving short- and long-term outcomes, and potentially reducing poor health outcomes in adulthood."[3] Another 2017 article (published in *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics in North America*) finds that mindfulness-based practices hold great promise for helping trauma-affected children and families build protective resilience and improve parental stress management and engagement, yet these practices are dramatically underused.[4]

Insight Timer
https://insighttimer.com
This free app, available for iOS and Android devices, provides access to more than sixty thousand guided meditations from a variety of traditions, including Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Meditations can be filtered by topic, teacher, or time. Meditations specifically created for children are available. A timer with multiple chime sounds to choose from is also free with the app.

Mindfulness for Librarians Facebook Group
www.facebook.com/groups/mindfulnessforlibrarians
Administrated by several of the editors of The Mindful Librarian, this closed Facebook group is an excellent place to connect with other professionals integrating mindfulness into library work. Its active membership shares practice opportunities, articles, book reviews, and general support and has even begun experimenting with virtual practice sessions.

Collaborative Association for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
https://casel.org
CASEL is leading the way nationally to strenghten social-emotional learning (SEL) throughout the lifespan. They provide extensive research and developmental best practices, evaluate curriculums and programs, and inform policy decisions. A must-know organization for anyone who cares about whole-child development.

The Calm Schools Initiative
www.calm.com/schools
Aimed at building mindfulness in schools, this initiative provides training and resources free of charge to K-12 teachers worldwide. A subscription version is also available to those not working in the school setting, and some free resources are universally available.

Taking Care
https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences/?activity=taking-care
This site uses familiar characters to promote mindfulness techniques. Examples of freely available resources include "I Can Calm Myself Down" (a video featuring Cookie Monster), "Slow Down and Settle Down" (a video with techniques for helping children deal with anxiety), "Helping Kids Calm and Soothe Themselves" (an article), and "Creating Feelings of Safety and Calm" (printable yoga instructions featuring Grover).

Parental Mindfulness and Preschool Children's Emotion Regulation: The Role of Mindful Parenting and Secure Parent-Child Attachment
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12671-019-01120-y
We know that a strong bond between children and their parents in the earliest years is an important factor in healthy development. That is why libraries run family engagement programs and give development tips to parents. Although research into mindfulness is a relatively new field, this article describes a study involving 472 parents of preschoolers from ages three to six in China that examined the influence that parent mindfulness had their children's emotional regulation and how parent mindfulness affected the entire family, strengthening parent-child bonding. &

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1. *The Mindful Librarian: Connecting the Practice of Mindfulness to Librarianship*, edited by Richard Moniz et al. (Waltham, MA: Chandos, 2015).
2. Shirley Davis, "Trauma-Informed Care, Neuroplasticity and Mindfulness," CPTSD Foundation, January 27, 2019, https://cptsdfoundation.org/2019/01/27/trauma-informed-care-neuroplasticity-and-mindfulness.
3. Robin Ortiz and Erica M. Sibinga, "The Role of Mindfulness in Reducing the Adverse Effects of Childhood Stress and Trauma," *Children* (March 2017), www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5368427.
4. Christina Bethell et al., "Adverse Childhood Experiences, Resilience and Mindfulness-Based Approaches: Common Denominator Issues for Children with Emotional, Mental, or Behavioral Problems," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 25, no. 2 (April 2016), www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4863233.

alsc PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

EXCELLENCE ★ INNOVATION ★ RECOGNITION

Every year, more than $100,000 is given away through ALSC's professional awards, grants, and scholarships to ALSC members.

Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship
This fellowship provides up to a $4,000 stipend to allow a qualified children's librarian to spend a month or more reading at the University of Florida's Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature, which contains a special collection of 85,000 volumes of children's literature published mostly before 1950.

Penguin Random House Young Readers Group Award
This award, made possible by an annual gift from Penguin Young Readers Group and Random House Children's Books, provides a $600 stipend to up to four children's librarians to attend their first ALA Annual Conference. Recipients will also attend the Newbery-Caldecott-Legacy banquet.

ALSC Distinguished Service Award
This award honors an individual member of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) who has made significant contributions to, and an impact on, library service to children and/or ALSC. The recipient receives $2,000 and an engraved pin at the ALSC Membership Meeting during ALA Annual Conference.

Baker & Taylor Summer Reading Program Grant
The ALSC Summer Reading Program Grant is designed to encourage reading programs for children in public libraries by providing $3,000 in financial assistance, while recognizing ALSC members for outstanding program development.

and many more!

Applications open in the fall. Please visit: http://bit.ly/alscprofawards