

School Library

JUNE 1986

Media Activities Monthly

VOLUME II, NUMBER 10



Library of Congress, see page 39



CATALYST

This column is designed to encourage discussion of major philosophical issues related to teaching library media skills.



Golden Library Chills Award

by David Loertscher

The following is a true report to the author. Only the names and locations have been changed to protect the guilty.

Rhonda Harvey was hired as an elementary school library media specialist in Goldmine, Kansas. She had learned one role for school library media specialist in her library education but in the interview for the job with the principal, she learned that he had something else in mind. Needing the job badly, Rhonda agreed.

"In this school," the principal said, "Our teachers need a 45 minute break each day for their planning period. To accomplish this, we have hired music, physical education and now library teachers. We would like you to teach library skills to each of the classes in the school for 45 minutes twice a week. We certainly hope that by doing this, the scores on the reference section of our basic skills tests will improve. Here is your schedule."

Rhonda noted that 90% of her day was taken up with library skills classes so that there was little time to be devoted to the myriad of other duties that she knew needed done.

The first two weeks of her schedule were difficult for Rhonda because she was preparing her curriculum. She wondered why her professors at the local university had been so little help for this practical challenge. One of the biggest problems was the constant interruption of her library skills classes by students from other classes coming into the

library. Since the library was small, any student coming in distracted her class and teachers had a bad habit of sending notes with students requesting materials. Rhonda decided that something had to give.

Rhonda scheduled an appointment with the principal. "You have hired me to teach library skills classes, but students from other classes keep coming in and disturbing us. I feel that I need uninterrupted time to teach. Therefore, I'd like to ask that we set a policy that no one may come to the library when skills classes are in session.

The principal agreed.

The policy statement was distributed to the faculty. Some grumbling was heard in the teacher's lounge, but since planning periods were sacred, no solution was suggested openly. Thus, 90% of the time, no one except scheduled groups may go to the Goldmine Elementary School Library — neither teachers nor students.

The GOLDEN LIBRARY CHILLS AWARD is presented to Rhonda for completely missing the point of the function of a library and to her principal who was gullible enough to write an extraordinary foolish policy on library usage.

P.S. If you find yourself as a library media specialist in a similar situation, do the children of America a favor. Quit. If you are a principal and your library media specialist favors the closing of the library to use, fire that person.



David Loertscher is Program Coordinator for Instructional Resources, College of Education, University of Arkansas, and has written prolifically in the library media literature.