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ESSA: An Opportunity for School Library Funding

The authors present valuable talking points and outline ways in which school librarians can be active players in the grant application process

Using the Women's March

Presenting a forum for analyzing the historical January Women's March on D.C. (and around the world)

Coteaching Across STEM Disciplines

STEM-ALL project, funded by IMLS, which provides coteaching theory and an outline for coteaching practice for preservice teachers and librarians





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NOTEBOOK



The Various Levels of Activism

Deborah Levitov and Christie Kaaland

Teacher librarians have a long history of advocating for readers and researchers to become activists in their own learning, their school, and their communities.

Librarians are constantly curating resources, which naturally guide students toward participatory, informed, empathetic citizenship and scholarship. From whatever political or religious stance students derive, it goes to the heart of school librarianship that children ~ and educators as well ~ make better decisions or become active citizens more rationally when they are armed with sound and well-rounded information. Featured in this issue are articles demonstrating this professional practice in action, at many levels.

Offering a way to observe, study, and discuss activism, citizenship, and democracy in action, Levitov's article, along with a supporting TL poster page, presents a forum for analyzing the historical January Women's March on D.C. (and around the world). This, in turn, can serve as a way to launch more extensive, real world, social action or social justice involvement by students.

It is logical that students are more likely to become effective and active members of society if they are allowed more participation in their own educational decision-making, from research topic choice to analyzing their learning and engaging in meaningful thinking and analysis. Three articles in this issue demonstrate this in action. They show different ways that high school students in charge of their own learning learn more deeply and develop a thorough understanding of the process.

Maniotes and Cellucci offer student-empowering self-assessment tools during and following student inquiry research, which makes learning more meaningful with an appreciation for the process. Similarly,

Fake News, a Rant, and New Standards

David V. Loertscher

With the rise of fake news sources, unsubstantiated claims, and alternative truths, teacher librarians face a major challenge to help students base ideas, decisions, and positions on the most authoritative sources of information. It is no simple task anymore, since so many people seem to believe whatever they read on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. Children and teens must be perplexed as they hear polarized adults trusting only information that supports their beliefs without any degree of questioning.

As the next generation faces the juggernaut of information pushing toward them every moment of every day, do they respond as gullible or as cynical? Is there a way to encourage healthy skepticism as a way of crossing major divides amid a war of words and conflict?

As search engines get better acquainted with each person's preferences, they silo us all and feed us what we like to receive as we search. The search engine knows your religion, your political preferences, and what topics or questions you usually search for. Everyone must take command of search results if we are to encounter a breadth of ideas about a topic we are investigating. Yet, do adults even recognize silo-ing and make a conscious decision to broaden their perspective, or are they happy to remain polarized?

For some time, teacher librarians have been assisting young people to ascertain quality information and how it can be used, but the battle seems to have intensified to a fever pitch.

One of the problems is that we as adults might have major difficulties identifying and determining exactly what is quality information. We as a group come from a variety of backgrounds, degrees, and specializations. How is a literature

major to make a decision on the quality of scientific claims? Major political issues? Or foreign/domestic claims? It is no simple task, and a full-length book that is a science rant is a case in point.

Chris McGown, author of *Saving Science: Why We Need Hands-On Science to Engage Kids, Inspire Curiosity and Improve Education* (2017), presents his impressive credentials as a scientist and, in this lengthy rant of the state of science education in schools, claims that much of the science in the New Generation Science Standards plus other state science standards has major inaccuracies and errors. He disdains the work of educators who proclaim the best ways to teach science and, instead, presents time-honored basic science that every child and teen should understand deeply. He is a master teacher and has interacted with and taught many classes of children and teens over the years as he first mystifies his audience with a clever demonstration and then proceeds to teach the science behind it. Many of the experiments he does with kids are from the proofs done by the great scientists of the past.

One thing for sure to know about good science is admitting humility, that science is all about asking questions and never knowing everything. James Beach (2016), who was searching for a new atomic particle, admits in a recent TED Talk that he was wrong, even though 500 scientific papers were written about his first examination and experiment in physics. Imagine students who find and hitch their own research papers to articles in our databases that support the original Beach theory but miss his retraction.

McGown (2017), who is trying to save science, attempts to teach and have students replicate “safe” science in areas where there is certainty. He is confident that his teaching method is so powerful that students will respond enthusiastically—no need to start with their interests, such as building an artificial hand for our classmate. I could not discover through his experience what percent of his students actually achieve a high degree of deep understanding, but one thing is clear: McGown believes that no other educator's ideas of how to teach are worthy of consideration, only his own techniques. Wiggins and McTigue? He likes nothing they recommend as good teaching.

In all of McGown's rants, he emphasizes that teachers need to teach the best science, and teacher librarians need to encourage the finding of the most accurate information as students search. There is so much pseudoscience out there, so much disagreement over so many topics in science, that

the question of who to trust looms large.

Looking beyond science to our own field, what can we trust in the research done by our own scholars? Who believes the research of Keith Curry Lance, Ross Todd, and other researchers in the field? Who believes the research on the positive differences that technology makes in teaching and learning? There are plenty of naysayers out there.

Within librarianship and AASL, the research base of our field has been derived from:

- Doctoral dissertations
- State funding of projects like those of Keith Curry Lance and Ross Todd
- Very few studies funded by the federal government, such as IMLS
- Conference research-based presentations, such as the Treasure Mountain Research Retreat and various research forums at AASL
- The AASL research journal *School Library Research*
- Library educators who are trying to achieve tenure at their institutions

Within AASL, historically, the research committee encouraged research, but more recently, the library educator's section has co-opted research as their agenda. Using an IMLS grant, AASL also sponsored a community of scholars known as CLASS. Two open meetings of this group have explored ways to encourage stronger research. However, that group has now become a secret conclave of very selective folks. In the second of the CLASS meetings, there were 43 proposed research projects submitted by the participants. In a content analysis of the proposals,

only 12 had the potential to link the impact of the school library to teaching and learning effectiveness in the school. Obviously, much more needs to be done to identify the indispensable practices that solidify our claims. If the feds concentrate on charter schools for the next 4 or 8 years, our position in education is in grave danger since almost no charter schools hire teacher librarians. AASL needs to do something extraordinary to turn the research focus around. For individual teacher librarians, Ross Todd recommends microdocumentation of your interventions (i.e., each practitioner should collect evidence of impact on teaching and learning). Circulation statistics and number of lessons taught doesn't count for much. The impact of coteaching is a much larger area deserving attention.

The McGown rant also raises another red flag. With his identification of serious errors in the New Generation Science Standards, one begins to wonder about the new AASL standards that are to be released in November 2017. Our sister organization in ALA, ACRI, the academic librarians, completed their new standards a year or so ago. For those who participated as commentators throughout their open comment period, the improvement from first to last draft before publication was absolutely amazing. In AASL, this is a total secretive process with very little feedback solicited only from "select" individuals. What a wonderful thing it would be to have major figures in the sciences, social studies, language arts, fine arts, special ed, etc., to provide comments on the standards. Other editions have had official endorsement from other professional organizations before being released for general consumption. And how much better would

they be with widespread feedback from our field and associations like ISTE? The organization is setting itself up for unintended omissions, problematic or retro practices by a few who have set agendas. Can you imagine major voices in Congress being critical of the current vision of what a school library is supposed to contribute to education in a rant like McGown? Much is at stake here. And, as the old saying goes, "A word to the wise should be sufficient."

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