

the power of professional learning communities and other professional resources

ON COMMON GROUND: THE POWER OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Richard DuFour, Robert Eaker,
and Rebecca DuFour, eds.

Teacher-librarians complain frequently about the lack of time to interact and collaborate with faculty on substantive issues related to the curriculum, working together on units of instruction, and the general low-level expectations that teachers have of library services. Yet for many years, this reviewer has been aware that some faculties get together regularly at times other than faculty meetings to read a professional book together, talk about substantive issues, and to do the things that general support groups do. Recently, the lack of communication within the school has become a major issue because of the emphasis on accountability and the need to build collaboration across a faculty if any real progress is to be made. Thus, here is my suggestion for one professional title to read personally and to read as a faculty.

This is a book that is easily read—even if you just skim the various headings—but its topic is vital. Professional learning communities are common in schools and districts where a major push is being made on quality and on building a cohesive effort to meet standards, to work through tough assessment issues, or to push school-wide initiatives. *On Common Ground* describes these communities in enough detail that the book can be used not only to form such a community, but also to monitor its activities and keep it focused. A professional learning community is not a gripe faculty meeting and certainly not a lunchroom casual conversation. For the teacher-librarian, a professional learning community provides an

opportunity to talk about issues in depth, to work with other leaders on solutions, to participate in school-wide initiatives, and to take the leadership role our literature has demanded. Therefore, the mandate is that every teacher-librarian read this one professional book this year and push for the development or refinement of a professional learning community in every school. Yes, there are union issues. Yes, there are time issues. However, no organization can survive, grow, evolve, or remain healthy if group reflection and improvement are not center posts of their organizational structure. Professional learning communities can be structured in an individual school, at the district level, and—via the miracle of technology—can exist rather well in virtual space where they might be titled “collaboratives.”

The chapter titles of this volume provide a good overview of the contents: “On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities”; “Recurring Themes of Professional Learning Communities and the Assumptions They Challenge”; “What Is a Professional Learning Community?”; “Putting It All Together: Standards, Assessment, and Accountability in Successful Professional Learning Communities”; “Assessment for Learning: Building a Culture of Confident Learners”; “Masters of Motivation”; “Turning Book Burners Into Lifelong Learners”; “No Turning Back: The Ironclad Case for Professional Learning Communities”; “Leading for Transformation in Teaching, Learning, and Relationships”; “More Effective Schools: Professional Learning Communities in Action”; “Implementing PLCs in the Chicago Public Schools”; and “Closing the Knowing-Doing-Gap.”

If that list of topics did not grab your attention, particularly the book-burning one, just order a copy anyway and take this

one for a quiet read on the beach. Save time in your reading for a reflection on how your school works, how a professional learning community could make things better for everyone, and cement your role as a fabulous leader in the struggle to achieve and make a difference for every child. (National Educational Service, 2005. 272 pp. \$29.95. 1-932127-42-9).

Bottom Line: Buy this one immediately!

A STAFF DEVELOPMENT GUIDE TO WORKSHOPS FOR TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION LITERACY: READY TO PRESENT!

Kay Bishop, Sue Janczak,
and Jennifer Cahall

Are you in need of almost instant professional development ideas for the integration of technology and information literacy into the program and practices of the school? If so, Bishop, Janczak, and Cahall have provided a set of plans, complete with handouts, on a CD-ROM for use. Chapter 1 of the book provides general background information on how to conduct effective staff development workshops. The remaining chapters follow the format and headings used in chapter 1, but they address specific workshop topics. Each chapter provides the following sections: background and information needs related to the topic; planning the workshop; conducting the workshop; evaluating the workshop; follow-up activities; final tips; and references and selected resources. Materials on the CD-ROM have varying designs, but each chapter includes the following items: A workshop announcement; a workshop agenda; a PowerPoint presentation; a workshop evaluation form; and a handout of selected resources. Workshop topics include: Don't Be a Copycat: Learning About Copyright; The Plagiarism Plague: Detection and Prevention; Going Digital: Using Digital Cameras in the Classroom; Joining the Web: Designing Classroom Web Pages; Inspector Quest: Designing Inquiry-Based Web Projects; Pennywise: Conducting Virtual Field Trips; and Compact It: Creating Electronic Portfolios. This introduction to the contents should be sufficient to know whether the book will be a valuable tool in your collection. (Linworth, 2005. 128 pp. \$39.95. 1-58683-155-0).



**MICHELE
GORMAN**

GRAPHIC NOVELS

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

Grades 4-9

Amelia Earhart: Free in the skies. Robert Burieligh. Silver Whistle Books, 2003. \$16.00. 0-15-202498-0. This illustrated biography for younger readers highlights a handful of historical moments in Earhart's life, from her first ride in a plane to her first solo flight across the Atlantic.

Four pictures by Emily Carr. Nicolas Debon. Groundwood Books, 2003. \$15.95. 0-88899-532-6. With the selection of four paintings, Debon highlights four distinct time periods in the life of Canadian artist Emily "Millie" Carr, one of the great women artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Julius Caesar: The life of a Roman general. Gary Jeffrey, Kate Petty, and Sam Hadley. Rosen Publishing Group, 2005. \$26.50. 1-4042-0239-0. One of 12 new graphic nonfiction titles released in 2005 by Rosen Publishing, this educational biography is filled with information about the life and times of the ambitious and ruthless Roman leader.

The Salem witch trials (Graphic Library: History). Michael Martin and Brian Bascle. Capstone Press, 2005. \$22.60. 0-7368-3847-3. One of eight new graphic nonfiction titles for younger readers published by Capstone in the spring of 2005, this comic tale takes the reader inside the historical witch trials that took place in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692.

The sandwalk adventures: An adventure in evolution told in five chapters. Jay Hosler. Active Synapse, 2003. \$20.00. 0-9677255-1-8. As silly as it is educational, Charles Darwin must convince the follicle mites living in his left eyebrow that he is not their creator in this wacky tale of evolution.

Bottom Line: Provides almost-instant professional development ideas for the integration of technology and information literacy, complete with handouts.

ACTION RESEARCH: A GUIDE FOR LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

Jody K. Howard and Su A. Eckhardt

There are a number of action research volumes available from both library publishers and general education publishers. With emphasis on using scientifically based research to build solid learning experiences, the need to be more analytical has never been stronger in the education community. Howard and Eckhardt's book joins Farmer's *How to Conduct Action Research* (AASL, 2003) and Loertscher and Todd's *We Boost Achievement* (Hi Willow, 2003). All three can be used to build projects at the school level, testing various ideas for impact on achievement. They can all be used in professional development workshops at the district level, as individual studies, and as group thinks with a few professionals. If you have not read or studied any of these titles, it is time to do so. (Linworth, 2005. 160 pp. \$39.95. 1-58683-177-1).

Bottom Line: Recommended as a practical guide to formulating a local study, carrying it out, and analyzing its results.

GERALD MCDERMOTT AND YOU

Jon C. Stott

Every child deserves to be exposed to the many wonderful works of Gerald McDermott. Stott is the first author in a series published by Libraries Unlimited to cover the important works of remarkable authors and illustrators. For McDermott, the author provides a short biography, and then, in chapters, provides guidance for each major title. So for *Anansi the Spider*, there is an introduction to the story, followed by the author's discussion of that story. Then Stott provides engagement activities and extension activities that teacher-librarians or classroom teachers can use as is or integrate into various curricular areas. Eleven of McDermott's books are covered in this fashion, and the final chapter of the book covers seven books briefly. The book ends with a bibliography of McDermott's works. (Li-

braries Unlimited, 2004. 128 pp. \$35.00. 1-59158-175-3).

Bottom Line: Highly recommended for those who want to acquaint students with both the author and a particular work in depth.

READY, SET, MOTIVATE!: HOW TO CAPTURE YOUNG READERS WITH VISUAL AIDS

Jennifer B. Coleman

Quick activities to encourage reading are useful when there is a bit of time with a group available, for activities during a recess, or for after-school reading motivation. Coleman provides 26 quick ideas, some very familiar and others a bit creative. A few topics include booktalking, cereal box biographies, displays, elections, hunts, invitations, jumbles, kidmarks, letter links, mobiles, and so forth. There is nothing here to recommend the activities as the main event with literature when literacy is at stake, but for a break from seriousness, a little fun is appropriate. When used in this fashion, the book and its ideas are recommended, particularly if used by a volunteer or paraprofessional. (Linworth, 2004. 104 pp. \$24.95. 1-58683-179-8).

Bottom Line: Worth a look as a fun activity guide to encourage reading.

MATH IN FABLES & MYTHS: SOLVING WORD PROBLEMS & READERS' THEATRE

Nancy Polette and Joan Ebbesmeyer

Story problems in math seem to be such a challenge for children and are so common on achievement tests that their mastery is essential. Polette and Ebbesmeyer recommend the integration of learning story problems by beginning with common stories, myths, and fables the children know, and using the power of the story to introduce math problems that students can solve. Another dimension is to have the students do so in a readers' theater format.

How does this work? First, the teacher-librarian and the teacher should select the particular math skill that needs reinforcement. Then, go to the book and select and reproduce a one-page readers' theater that includes that particular math skill. I recommend that the fable or story is enjoyed by the students first, just as a piece of litera-

ture. Next, select students for the enactment, plus the math. Typically, four readers briefly retell the story, each posing a math problem for the class to solve. The listeners are encouraged to use the sense of story, combine this with the math problem to solve, and, hopefully, there is a connection between the story and the problem.

Such techniques encourage elementary students to attack a math problem within a narrative. Furthermore, the technique here is another dimension of the need to transfer math into the real world. We may learn first how to add two plus two. By using a story, however, we can understand that there are two ducks and two geese in a fictional story for a total of four birds in the story. Then, we can go to the pond outside the school and list the numbers of each animal we find for a total number of animals present.

Connections, connections, and transfer-ence. This is one way the materials from the library can be integrated into the math classroom, making a difference in how children can succeed in making sense of mathematics. This book is recommended to the teacher-librarian and as an entree into the math classroom. Try a few of these activities lining up literature and math, then evaluate the activities from two stand-points: Are the students enjoying the stories, and are they able to use the power of story to see connections in the world of math? The challenge, of course, is that if these types of activities do not work with your students, then what types of activities could be created to make the essential connections? (Pieces of Learning, 2005. 118 pp. \$14.95. 1-931334-58-7).

Bottom Line: Highly recommended as a start in integrating elementary math skills with the power of story.

**I-SEARCH FOR SUCCESS:
A HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUAL
FOR CONNECTING THE
I-SEARCH PROCESS WITH
STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT,
AND EVIDENCE-BASED
PRACTICE**

Donna Duncan and Laura Lockhart
The I-Search technique of doing research began with high school English teachers searching for a systematic way of helping teens attack a project systematically. It parallels the steps of most information



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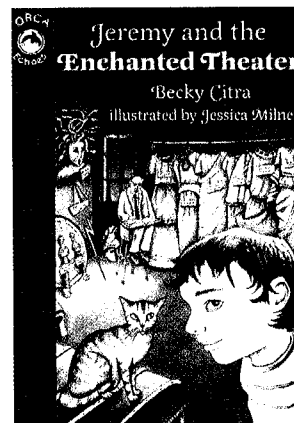
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Art and religion in ancient Rome (Primary sources of ancient civilizations: Rome). Daniel Gedacht. PowerKids, 2004. \$14.95. 0-8239-6776-X. Grades 2-5. Information about ancient Rome is presented with primary source photographs and facts about temples, gods and goddesses, beliefs, and ceremonies in a 24-page format.

Hoaxes (Unexplained). Judith Herbst. Lerner, 2005. \$19.95. 0-8225-1629-2. Grades 4-6. Here is a logical and factual look at five hoaxes beginning with Conan Doyle's belief in fairies in a photo to the crop circle puzzle. The high-interest, eight-title series includes *Aliens*, *UFOs*, and *Vanished*, all with resources lists, web sites, and index.

I and you and don't forget who: What is a pronoun? (Words are categorical). Brian Cleary. Carolrhoda, 2004. \$14.95. 1-57505-596-1. Grades 2-6. Fun rhymes and cartoon-type illustrations make understanding pronouns easier: "Just like a substitute teaches your class/when she's asked to fill in for your teacher,/a pronoun steps in as a sub for a noun,/becoming the star of the feature." Other parts of speech are similarly presented in the series.

Is that true?: Kids talk about honesty (Kids talk). Pamela Nettleton. Picture Window, 2005. \$16.27. 1-4048-0619-9. Grades 4-6. Told through the voice of Frank, a 13-year-old "advice columnist," kids ask for help through letters with situations from feeling guilty after cheating on a test to dealing with a bossy friend. Includes an honesty quiz, glossary, and index.

Police station (Pebble plus: a visit to). Patricia Murphy. Compass Point, 2005. \$13.55. 0-7368-2591-9. PreS-Grade 2. With simple text and photographs, readers meet the police dispatcher, have fingerprints taken, and glimpse the jail cell. Includes glossary, index, and web sites.

literacy models promoted by teacher-librarians, and it should be adopted by teacher-librarians if the teachers feel strongly about its structure as compared to models such as the Big Six. Duncan and Lockhart build a method for teaching this process in elementary and middle schools. Their volume is chock-full of teaching ideas, handouts, guidance, minilessons, and ways to help students through a complete research project. If teacher-librarians are looking for more guidance in this method, or if this method is under consideration, then this volume is highly recommended. Even for teenagers struggling with the process or who need a simpler interpretation of the process, this volume is worth the investment. (Neal-Schuman, 2005. 250 pp. \$75.00. 1-55570-510-3).
Bottom Line: Highly recommended for those who need guidance through the research process.

CHILDREN'S BOOK CORNER: A READ-ALoud RESOURCE WITH TIPS, TECHNIQUES, AND PLANS FOR TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS, AND PARENTS, LEVEL GRADES 1 AND 2

Judy Bradbury, photographs by Gene Bradbury
The No Child Left Behind strategy for teaching reading centers is drill, drill, and more drill. So be it. But teacher-librarians know that without teaching the love of reading, children tend to become aliterate—knowing how but doing it only when forced to do so. Bradbury provides ideas that adults can use with grades 1 and 2 to read aloud to children in a fun way, including many reading techniques that enhance all the reading skills in a pleasurable way. Many of these techniques can be taught and used by volunteers or paraprofessionals who can conduct read-alouds in any school or public library setting. We are reminded that there is quite a difference between those who read aloud well and those who just read out loud. Simple techniques can grab children's listening attention and motivate more and more children to become readers in the early grades. (Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 264 pp. \$32.00. 1-59158-047-1).

Bottom Line: This volume is worth the price to build a larger repertoire of successful read-aloud ideas, and to see that every child is experiencing a regular diet of active listening.

CREATING DIGITAL VIDEO IN YOUR SCHOOL: HOW TO SHOOT, EDIT, PRODUCE, DISTRIBUTE AND INCORPORATE DIGITAL MEDIA INTO THE CURRICULUM

Ann Bell
The potential of digital video in education is incredible when used as a tool for enhancing learning. Superior to the regular analog format, the digital version cannot only be captured and played, but also streamed via the Internet from the school to home or beyond into the community. Bell provides a concise manual for the beginner in this format, teaching how to purchase the correct equipment, set up a production area, produce the product, and then get it ready for viewing. Many students in the typical school may already be into the production of digital video, so they can be used to help teach novices the various techniques required for an acceptable production.

Using this book along with those who have a bit of experience can add this wonderful new technology to the vast array of technologies that have the potential to enhance learning. Every library program should include a wide array of such technologies, and for that reason, Bell's book is highly recommended for those wanting to get started. (Linworth Books, 2005. 175 pp. \$39.95. 1-58683-186-0).

Bottom Line: Highly recommended for those who want to use digital video in the classroom.

DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING GRAPHIC NOVEL COLLECTIONS

Steve Miller
There are a number of volumes now available that give the teacher-librarian suggestions on how to build a collection of graphic novels. Linworth, Libraries Unlimited, and Hi Willow all have such titles. Miller's volume joins this group as another



**JOANNE
TROUTNER**

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Alice in Vivaldi's Four Seasons. Music Games International. (www.interactiveclassics.com). Grades K-12. This collection of musical games and activities will delight and enchant youngsters and music lovers of all ages with the various games, jigsaw puzzles, riddles, and performance of the Four Seasons. Each game and activity has oral directions ensuring that beginning or nonreaders can be successful. The various options provide an excellent introduction to classical music—a superb recommendation for teachers and parents.

UnitedStreaming. Discovery Education. (www.unitedstreaming.com/). Grades K-12. This subscription-based service is the Cadillac of video streaming options, offering the best materials for professional development and teaching. Items can be searched via keyword, grade level, curriculum area, and U.S. or Canadian standards. Subscribers can download the videos or show them via Windows Media Player or Quicktime as streaming video. Other superb teaching options include an indexed list of over 2,700 still images, 1,200 clip art images, 50 writing prompts that include a visual and can be printed, and nearly 1,500 videos that can be legally edited.

Scoop! De Marque, Inc. (www.mindservegroup.com) U.S. and (www.demarque.com) Canadian access. Grades K-12. Would you like to receive 140 new learning options using the software classic Inspiration? A subscription-based lesson plan service provides just that. Scoop! lesson plans contain expectations, objectives, lists of materials needed, and activities that are designed to help students learn about research and thinking skills, and to practice a number of other skills.

helpful and useful guide. Graphic novels, those lengthy comic books, can be graphic indeed with their frank sexual content and portrayal of well-endowed females. However, there are plenty of excellent titles available, and such a huge readership among both children and teens exists that a serious collection in the school or public library is not only warranted, but is also part of a public relations effort to get readers into the library and to keep them reading.

Miller's book assists the reader in understanding this genre, how graphic novels are handled in libraries, how to promote them to readers (they will promote themselves if positioned correctly in any public space), and how to select the best titles. Numerous titles are listed for the teacher-librarian's consideration. (Neal-Schuman, 2005. 150 pp. \$49.95. 1-55570-461).

Bottom Line: Recommended to the teacher-librarian who wants to start a graphic novel collection.

TEACHING TV PRODUCTION IN A DIGITAL WORLD: INTEGRATING MEDIA LITERACY

Robert F. Kenny, Ph.D.

When there is a formal class in digital TV instruction in your school, the Kenny volume is worthy of consideration as the textbook. Libraries Unlimited publishes both the student and teacher editions of this work, so there are lesson outlines and teacher suggestions for some 78 topics, covering the full spectrum of introduction to equipment, setting up and operating the studio, building and editing content, and airing the result. This reviewer particularly likes the integration of media literacy into this course that helps students on the production end recognize the many positive and negative

messages that are used by the modern media to influence viewers. The idea here is to have the producers create a sense of responsibility in a media-flooded world. So, if you are looking for a textbook for a semester course in middle or high school, this textbook should be considered and compared with others you have used in the past or are considering. (Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 196 pp. \$37.50. 1-59158-199-0).

Bottom Line: Should be considered when looking for a middle or high school text on digital TV instruction.

MORE TEEN PROGRAMS THAT WORK

RoseMary Honnold

Yes, teacher-librarians are still in the reading business! So much is rightly made for collaboration to raise scores that we may lose sight of a central role for the teacher-librarian as a promoter of the love of reading. But how do we promote reading to teens when they are so busy with school, work, and pop culture? In this new volume, Honnold provides a collection of many more ideas for teen programming to add to the pool of ideas published in her first book. Most are positioned clearly in the public library, but so many ideas can be adapted to the school and to after-school programs and could be jointly sponsored by school and public libraries that this volume is a good idea generator and thus a worthwhile purchase for both school and public librarians. The ideas are described in just enough depth that they could be used and modified for almost any library. This book challenges the assumption that the phrase "teen readers" is not an oxymoron. (Neal-Schuman, 2005. 200 pp. \$49.94. 1-55570-529-4).

Bottom Line: Recommended.

