

# TEACHER LIBRARIAN

The Journal for School Library Professionals

is committed to collaborative partnerships for improved student learning through thought-provoking and challenging feature articles, strategies for effective advocacy, regular review columns, and critical analyses of management and programming issues.

Founder • Ken Haycock  
Publisher • Edward Kurdyla  
Coeditor • David Loertscher  
Coeditor • Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux  
Managing Editor • Corinne O. Burton  
editor@teacherlibrarian.com

## COLUMNISTS

Rachelle Lasky Bliz, David Gill,  
Reid Goldsborough, Sharon Grover,  
Lizette Hannegan, Suzanne Myers-Harold,  
Sara Catherine Howard, Larry Johnson,  
Annette Lamb, David Loertscher,  
Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux, Kathleen Odean,  
John Peters, Joe Sutliff Sanders,  
Joanne Troutner, Betty Winslow

## EDITORIAL OFFICES TEACHER LIBRARIAN

The Journal for School Library Professionals  
4501 Forbes Blvd., Suite 200  
Lanham, MD 20706  
Phone: 1-800-273-2223  
Fax: 717-794-3852

E-mail: admin@teacherlibrarian.com

Subscription e-mail: journals@rowman.com  
Web site: www.teacherlibrarian.com

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The Goldman Group,  
P.O. Box 270, Lutz, FL 33559  
Phone: 813-949-0006; Fax: 813-2433-5181  
E-mail: librarian@gggpubs.com

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## notebook

by david loertscher and  
elizabeth "betty" marcoux



# of twisty cones and treasure mountain

In times of economic downturn, we look for the bright spots in our profession where we can point to what is happening that is positive. For this issue, Valerie Diggs' move to a learning commons is an outstanding example of what one person with vision can do to change the entire idea of what the best school library looks like when it is transformed. Leaders like Valerie do not wait to get into the center of teaching and learning; they just move in, especially in this era of digital natives and social networkers.

Considering the change in focus in Washington, we look for opportunities and move into the conversations. In upgrading technology for the school, we might push wireless in the learning commons. We might sniff out funded initiatives that come not only from the Feds but from the state. We get a seat at the table.

In a recent interview with the respected author Charlotte Danielson, I asked her how teacher-librarians could move into the center of teaching and learning. She gave some sage advice. "Tell them to talk learning." What does that mean? It means that in professional learning communities (PLC) we talk the language of reading, writing, math, and science, and give ideas how to boost the PLCs agendas; not our separate agenda. We make everyone feel like we are there to achieve their aims. Yes, as teacher-librarians we have our own agenda, but we are building twisty soft ice cream cones that swirl out chocolate with their vanilla and the result is better than if we work separately.

In talking to representatives of a major testing service, they told me this: states are asking the companies to push up testing from level one to level three. Level one questions on tests are factual recall. Level two and level three move up toward higher-level critical and creative thinking. If that is the case, then here is a major opportunity for teacher-librarians to just move in. When learners are flooded with information, we co-teach to push higher level thinking as kids go beyond information location to information evaluation, analysis, and synthesis. Every time we do this with a teacher, both adults are moving learners toward test question level three. That is what we do. We just move in, because the essence of information literacy is higher level thinking.

Such is the stuff of linking ourselves to achievement.

In another recent conversation with some major policy makers, it was clear that the pendulum will now swing from relying not solely on the test but toward a wider view of excellence. That means we are in. It is not just how many books or databases or computers we have. We pride ourselves that in every co-teaching experience, we are raising the bar on higher-level thinking. Every teacher who co-teaches with us gets an extra pair of hands and ears, a coaching partner and someone who can help differentiate across all types of learners.

Tell your stories of moving in. Invite other specialists in the school to move into the classroom with you. Collect student work that demonstrates why those databases enriched the research, the writing, and the deep understanding. Demonstrate how those web 2.0 tools actually pushed learning; not the fact that you were using technology as "toys."

When everyone else is moaning about the downturn, turn up your conversation about how we can increase learning by collaborating because two heads are better than one. Everyone complains that collaboration takes more time. It does in the beginning, but

after a few practices, IT TAKES LESS TIME because the two adults keep building a track record that kids learn more when the two adults get better at it. Repeat after me: Together, we make a bigger difference in learning than either of us could do alone. Say that over three times. Memorize it and then say it every time we can push the conversation in the direction of learning. For every faculty member who believes us, we deliver. The word gets out: if you want your kids to do better, co-teach with the teacher-librarian. Count the number of times that happens over the school year and brag and brag and brag about those teachers and their classes and their scores on those higher level tests. It is the only way we are going to survive as a profession. It is our twisty cone strategy.

Betty Marcoux detailed much of what we are saying by interviewing winners of the NSLMPY awards from AASL. You can read the results in this issue. Those who excel in our profession move in.

Another note about this issue: In the Best of the Best issue each year, our managing editor, Corinne Burton gathers together various best lists for your convenience and as a check against our selections over the past year. We are particularly happy to have Isabel Schon's article on books in Spanish along with the great updates by our regular columnists. Don't forget to check the best professional books of the year against your professional book shelf.

Now to Treasure Mountain: For 20 years, practitioners and researchers have met at the Treasure Mountain Research Retreat that usually meets during the pre-conference day of AASL. You can be a part of this fabulous experience (ask anyone who has ever been). This year we are asking participants to interview major education writers outside our field about how teacher-librarians can move into the center to teaching and learning. We are going to take the results of all those interviews and put them together at Treasure Mountain during the pre-conference days. How about joining us? It will be an unforgettable experience. Get information by going to <http://www.davidvl.org> and finding the tab for Treasure Mountain on the ribbon or go directly to: <http://treasuremountain.pbwiki.org>.

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