



"... the connection between the reading program of the school library and reading in a K-12 school is most often non-existent."

# The Role of a School Library in a School's Reading Program

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As a foundational element of schooling, learning to read and reading to learn is every bit as important in the 21st century as it has ever been. Whether interacting online, doing assignments, taking tests, or social networking, the ability to read and read well affects every part of our existence and often predicts success throughout life.

## WHAT IS OUR CURRENT ROLE?

As editors of *Teacher Librarian*, we have seen the development of major national initiatives dealing with reading both in the United States and in Canada over the past several decades. We have been concerned as we read professional literature and research about reading that the connection between the reading program of the school library and reading in a K-12 school is most often non-existent.

What program connections can the professional teacher-librarian make that contribute to the success of the reading program in the school? In other words, besides being a warehouse of reading materials upon which everyone draws, what initiatives spring from collaboration between the classroom teacher, the reading specialist, and the teacher-librarian in a school that pushes foundational literacy?

We began with a variety of foundational documents that formulate a role checklist for libraries at the heart of a reading program and then asked the *Teacher Librarian* advisory board and other professionals to respond. Today, as you build a learning commons model

for your school library, here is our collaboratively built checklist for consideration. Which of the following program elements exist in your school to increase reading? Which of these are ones you can take on as a programmatic goal this year in your school library/learning commons? Are there missing elements that are contributing to reading in your school?

## ACCESS TO PROFESSIONALS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL

- All Pre-K-12 classroom teachers are knowledgeable in building reading skills.
- Full time reading specialists serve all students in building reading skills and fluency.
- Full time credentialed teacher-librarians are knowledgeable in the teaching of reading and the development of life-long readers.
- Administrators have background education in reading across the school and prioritize reading for all students.
- Full time support personnel handle the warehousing of physical reading materials, access, circulation, and repair, making reading accessible to all while supporting the professionals' reading habits and behaviors.
- All faculty and staff model life-long reading importance to all students.



## JUNIOR FICTION

### TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME

**One-handed catch.** M.J. Auch. Henry Holt, 2006. \$17.95. 978-0-8050-7900-3. Grades 5-8. When eleven-year-old Norm's hand is amputated after a terrible accident, he struggles with his dad's grief, his mom's determination to make Norm self-sufficient, and his own longings for baseball and art. Includes author's note.

**Safe at home.** Sharon Robinson. Scholastic, 2006. \$16.99. 978-0-43967-197-2. Grades 4-6. When ten-year-old Elijah and his widowed mom move back to Harlem to live with Grandma, he's shanghaied into playing baseball instead of basketball. Isn't dealing with grief, loneliness, and the local bully enough stress?

**So long, Jackie Robinson.** Nancy L. M. Russell. Key Porter Books, 2007. \$7.95. 978-1-55263-863-7. Grades 5-7. When twelve-year-old Matt's family moves to Quebec, Matt's miserable. He misses his dad. He only speaks English. He likes baseball, not hockey! He'll soon discover that the Montreal Royals (and Jackie Robinson) are about to make baseball history.

**Stealing home.** Ellen Schwartz. Tundra Books, 2006. \$8.95. 978-0-88776-765-4. Grades 4-6. In 1947, unwed mothers and mixed relationships (racial or religious) were frowned on, so Joey, a nine-year-old orphan (and Yankees fan), struggles with prejudice and family secrets (and admiration for Dodger Jackie Robinson) when he joins his estranged Jewish grandparents in Brooklyn.

**Stumptown kid.** Carol Gorman and Ron J. Findley. Peachtree Publishers, 2005. \$15.95. 978-1-56145-337-5. Grades 6-8. When eleven-year-old Charlie and his widowed mom befriend a former Negro Leagues player who drifts into their Iowa town in 1952 and offers to coach Charlie's all-white baseball team, many townspeople (including Charlie's mom's boyfriend) violently disapprove.

• Physical and virtual collections of professional resources are built to support reading.

• Face to face and virtual discussion forums are created to build capacity collectively.

### ACCESS TO BOOKS AND OTHER READING MATERIALS

• There is access to a plethora of reading materials below, at, and above one's reading level with unlimited circulation to classrooms and homes.

• Circulation policies allow and encourage children to check out a variety of self-selected books to read regardless of "level."

• Learners are provided with their choice of many genres and formats both fiction and informational.

• Access to materials in print, digital, audio, and in any combination includes access to the technologies necessary to use these materials.

• Every student and teacher has a preferred device(s) on which to enjoy reading in any format.

• Every student and teacher receives information about new and innovative reading opportunities from the teacher-librarian.

• Regardless of language, there is appropriate access to a wide variety of multicultural materials for the reading community.

• Access to fictional resources crosses a wide range of interest levels and genres.

• Access to informational resources crosses a wide range of disciplines and personal interests.

• Continuous selection and weeding of materials and technologies provide current resources for the reading community.

• There is financial and professional compensation from the school for the lack of reading materials in a student's home.

• Rotating classroom collections from the library are readily available, frequent, and in large quantities. Every classroom is a print-rich environment.

• The entire school participates in the building of, access to, funding of, and

maintenance of a bountiful collection of reading materials.

• The teacher-librarian serves as the building's reading advisor on materials for the reading community.

• Students and teachers participate in resource suggestions and thus feel ownership of library collections.

### A WHOLE SCHOOL READING COMMUNITY

• A reading leadership team at every school includes the reading specialist, the teacher-librarian, administrators, and classroom teachers.

• A whole-school reading thread runs through every school improvement plan. Articulated instruction is reading focused.

• Reading is one of the major issues of the professional learning community or other school improvement initiative/structure and is openly discussed by all concerned parties.

• Reading initiatives draw in parents and the community, especially the public library community. Being a school-wide initiative, reading motivates wide participation and access—all building toward the habit of life-long reading.

• Everyone in the school is aware of the school-wide reading initiative and participates actively in it.

• Everyone in the school is using the power of technology to discuss, share, recommend, reflect on, critique, and encourage reading in the same ways they are doing in face-to-face groups. These discussions can extend beyond school boundaries and involve not only local schools, but also those from national and global areas.

• Data are collected to mark the progress of the reading program of the entire school. Data from the library's reading program folds into this assessment.

• The library media center serves as the hub of the entire reading program of the school, with a clear understanding of how to best facilitate all reading in the school.

• The value placed on reading is evident throughout the school.

## INTEGRATED READING- INSTRUCTION ACROSS THE GRADE LEVELS

- Reading skill, while introduced and cultivated in the early grades, remains integrated throughout all grades as needed by individual learners. Access to reading materials and cultivating reading interest are even more important than many prescriptive and repetitious reading skills.

- Sophistication of reading skills goes beyond decoding, fluency, and vocabulary instruction into understanding and critical response to difficult texts, points of view, reasoning, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis.

- If any member of the teaching or administrative staff lacks preparation to participate effectively in the whole-school reading plan, professional development is available and encouraged. This is particularly true at the middle and high school grade levels.

- If a strategy is not working with a particular student or group of students, alternative strategies are tried until something succeeds.

- If textbooks are too difficult or too easy for individual readers, the library is the source for appropriate textual materials on all levels and in a variety of formats. Differentiated instruction involves textbook understanding as well as project comprehension.

- The school's collaborative reading program extends into the development of other foundational literacies involving writing, media literacy, visual literacies, and efforts to build 21st century learning skills.

- Advice about successful reading programs is regularly sought from local, state, and national reading documents, reading research, standards, professional literature, and reading organizations.

- Action research is used to confirm what works in order to boost the entire reading program of the school, whether looking at individuals, groups, or the entire school.

- Reading is valued as a critical strategy to build vocabulary and background knowledge.

- Knowledge of the needs of different kinds of reading behaviors is gathered and applied to reading instruction and special initiatives. Example, boys and reading, enrichment, and other special needs, etc.

## TIME TO READ

- Time to read is a daily part of the school day and beyond. Reading is done before and after school, but more important, reading is scheduled during school hours.

- Time to read is adjustable for individuals as well as classes and large groups, but all students, teachers, and staff read daily.

- Time to read includes both required and recreational reading. The types of reading materials available are plentiful and tailored to the needs, abilities, and interests of the individual.

- Reading aloud daily to students of all ages is part of the time-to-read strategy.

## INTERACTION WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- The reading leadership team promotes collaboration with the public library on its programs and reading opportunities. Particular attention is paid to public library reading initiatives during school vacations.

- The reading leadership team seeks out community organizations and volunteers that can assist and support school-wide reading initiatives.

- District, state, regional, national, and international reading organizations available most often through the Internet become part of the school-wide reading program.

- Professional development of all staff includes participation in activities that enhance school reading initiatives.

- Reading contests and extrinsic motivation are replaced with collective goals and emphasis on the idea that "reading is its own reward." This idea is modeled often in the school.

- The reading leadership team communicates on a regular basis with the community about reading initiatives and programs.

# BOOKMARKIT

KATHLEEN ODEAN



## YA FICTION

### LEARNING TO BE YOURSELF

**Alking for the ride.** Sarah Dessen. Viking, 2009. \$19.99. 978-0-194-01194-0. Grades 8 and up. Quiet, studious Auden spends the summer before college with her self-centered writer father, his new young wife, and their baby. New friends, a possible romance, and learning to ride a bike transform Auden into more of a risk taker with a re-awakened sense of fun.

**Creature of the night.** Kate Thompson. Greenwillow, 2009. \$17.95. 978-1-59643-511-7. Grades 8-11. Bobby's single mother, who is on the dole, had him when she was fourteen, his age now. Bobby runs wild in Dublin, stealing cars and getting high. When they rent a house in the country, he sees a glimmer of how he could make a better life in the future, but it is hard to give up the urban thrills. Then a mystery, perhaps a supernatural one, makes country living more intriguing and a bit scary.

**King of the screwups.** K. L. Going. Harcourt, 2009. \$17.00. 978-0-15-206258-3. Grades 8 and up. Liam, a handsome straight boy who loves fashion and likes to party, brings a fresh perspective to this enjoyable read. After disappointing his driven businessman father once again, Liam avoids military school by going to spend his senior year with his uncle, a kind gay crossdresser who lives in an upstate NY trailer park. At his new school, Liam tries to buckle down and avoid being popular, which is harder than he expects.

**The vast fields of ordinary.** Nick Burd. Dial, 2009. \$16.99. 978-0-8037-3340-4. Grades 8 up. Secretly gay, with a boyfriend who rebuffs him in public, Dade expects a bleak suburban summer before college starts, watching his parents' marriage disintegrate. But the arrival on his street of Lucy, who is a lesbian, changes Dade's view of himself. And then Alex appears: handsome, openly gay, and very interested in Dade.

## FAMILY SUPPORT

- Parents and siblings are involved in building a reading community at home, and become partners in school reading initiatives.

- Efforts to include the home are particularly important if poverty or cultural values make reading less central to the home environment.

- Efforts are made to provide whatever means, resources, or training the family needs to elevate reading in the home.

- Parents are encouraged to borrow materials from school and public libraries.

- The reading leadership team helps parents to understand that many things count as reading, for example magazines, graphic novels, blogs, web sites, etc.

## COLLABORATIVE READING ACTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS

- School and public libraries collaborate to promote a plethora of reading activities.

- Activities that produce direct results replace those that take a great deal of time, efforts, and means but produce little in terms of results.

- Build a mix of strategies from a variety of reading activities (such as reading buddies, DEAR, digital book clubs, library card campaigns) that work in your educational community.

- Design interactive learning experiences with authors, illustrators, and poets.

- Develop authentic opportunities for readers to creatively express their connections to reading.

- Utilize technologies to encourage readers to discuss, write about, and communicate their understanding and build understanding with others.

## CONCLUDING IDEAS

As we look across the entire educational literature, various professional groups seem to carve out their own isolated role in stimulating reading competency. Often, there is little to no communication among the various groups about what constitutes

a vision of what works. This document assumes that each school has a literacy leadership team that brings them together. It represents a united effort in a school rather than fractured or competing ideas in the pursuit of reading excellence for a school's students. The biggest question is what can we do collaboratively that we cannot do separately?

Each school faces a unique set of strengths and challenges given their students, who have unique characteristics as the digital generation, a diverse cultural and language generation not found in previous generations.

The home environments from which students come also factor into their learning situations. With an attitude of continuous improvement or perpetual beta (as it is called in technology), sometimes fine tuning is in order. Research also finds that major overhauls are needed for every adult in the school regarding technology, collaboration, and student achievement. With so many student achievement expectations being set by states, provinces, or national governments, it is the school library media program that can bind these together and make things happen in all schools.

## FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

### AASL documents and resources

- AASL Reading4Life @your library: Position paper on the library media specialist's role in reading. Approved January 2009.

- AASL Values: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aboutaasl/aaslvalues/aaslvalues.cfm>

- AASL Strategic Plan: [http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aboutaasl/aasl-governance/aasldocuments/aasl\\_strategic\\_plan.pdf](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aboutaasl/aasl-governance/aasldocuments/aasl_strategic_plan.pdf)

- Standards for the 21st Century Learner: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learning-standards/standards.cfm>

- Best Sites for Teaching & Learning: [<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/standards/21stcentury/21stcentury.cfm> \(includes ReadWriteThink and Thinkfinity—both associated with the International Reading Association\)](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/bestlist/bestweb-</a></li></ul></div><div data-bbox=)

- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: <http://www.nbpts.org/>

- Essential Links: Resources for school library media program development: [http://aasl.ala.org/essentiallinks/index.php?title=Table\\_of\\_Contents](http://aasl.ala.org/essentiallinks/index.php?title=Table_of_Contents)

- How school library media specialists can assist you. Reading with your children: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aboutaasl/aaslcommunity/quicklinks/el/elread.cfm>

- Position Statement—Resource based instruction: Role of the school library media specialist in reading development: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslproftools/positionstatements/aaslpositionstatementresource.cfm>

- Position Statement—The value of independent reading in the school library media program: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslproftools/positionstatements/aaslpositionstatementvalueindependent.cfm>

### IRA Documents

- Standards for Reading Professionals (2003): <http://www.reading.org/downloads/resources/545standards2003/index.html>

- Category Descriptions of Reading Professionals (2007): <http://www.reading.org/downloads/standards/definitions.pdf>

- Adolescent Literacy: [http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Position\\_Statements\\_and\\_Resolutions/ps1036\\_adolescent.sflb.aspx](http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Position_Statements_and_Resolutions/ps1036_adolescent.sflb.aspx)

- Young Adults Choices for 2008: <http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=JAAL-52-3-YAChoices.html&mode=retrieve&D=10.1598/JAAL.52.3.6&F=JAAL-52-3-YAChoices.html&key=F54E706B-8EFF-4B38-84BD-2A24CA6C8A3B>

- Phonics Through Shared Reading (podcast): <http://www.reading.org/downloads/podcasts/CA-Gill.mp3>

- Children's Choices for 2008: <http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=RT-62-2-C Choices>



## ADULT BOOKS FOR TEENS

## NEW YORK CITY

**The Black Madonna.** Louisa Ermelino. Kensington, 2002. \$15.00. 978-0-758-20190-4. Grades 9-12. Teresa, Magdalena, and Antoinette become friends and raise families in New York's Little Italy. Taking place from the 1940s through the 1960s, this finely written novel, often laugh-out-loud hilarious, offers a realistic glimpse of life in the city.

**The devil wears Prada.** Lauren Weisberger. Anchor, 2006. \$7.99. 978-0-307-27555-4. Grades 9-12. The movie is good, but the novel gives more detail and richer insight into the life of narrator Andrea Sachs as she adjusts to life in New York and her job for the demanding, moody, Miranda Priestly.

**Extremely loud and incredibly close.** Jonathan Safran Foer. Mariner Books, 2006. \$13.95. 978-0-618-71165-9. Grades 9-12. After losing his father in the World Trade Center on 9/11/2001, precocious nine-year-old Oskar Schell embarks on a pilgrimage after discovering a mysterious key in his dad's possessions. This quirky, powerful novel ends with an emotional punch.

**Forever.** Pete Hamill. Back Bay Books, 2003. \$14.99. 978-0-316-73569-8. Grades 11-12. Connecting eighteenth century Irish immigrant Cormac O'Connor to the 9/11/2001 disaster is no easy feat, but readers willing to suspend belief and go along for the ride will be richly rewarded by this fascinating, wonderful novel. Great story telling and terrific characters make this book a page-turner.

**Metropolis.** Elizabeth Gaffney. Random House, 2006. \$13.95. 978-0-812-97085-2. Grades 11-12. Vividly drawn characters and detailed descriptions of the city put the reader in 1860s New York with German immigrant Frank Harris. By turns harrowing and rewarding, Harris's life is a great adventure.

html&mode=retrieve&D=10.1598/RT.62.2.8&F=RT-62-2-CC Choices. html&key=FD021889-A670-4C5E-BFDB-40E6F2B752C7

- Teaching Reading Well: [http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Reports\\_and\\_Standards/teaching\\_reading\\_well.sflb.aspx](http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Reports_and_Standards/teaching_reading_well.sflb.aspx)

- Prepared to Make a Difference: [http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Reports\\_and\\_Standards/1061teacher\\_ed\\_com\\_features.sflb.aspx](http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Reports_and_Standards/1061teacher_ed_com_features.sflb.aspx)

- Lectura y Vida home page: <http://www.lecturayvida.org.ar/>

- Accreditation Redesign: [http://www.ncate.org/public/062309\\_TeacherEdRequirements.asp](http://www.ncate.org/public/062309_TeacherEdRequirements.asp)

## NCTE Documents

- What do we know?—summaries of current educational research: <http://www.ncte.org/policy-research/wkw> (just being designed)

## Reading Research Reports

- IRA Supports Key Findings in Early Literacy Report: [http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Press/pr\\_NELP\\_report.sflb.aspx](http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Press/pr_NELP_report.sflb.aspx)

- Rethinking Reading Comprehension Instruction: <http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=/publications/journals/rrq/current/index.html&mode=redirect>

- 11 Factors That Help Schools Achieve: <http://www.whatworksinschools.org/factors.cfm>

- NEA to Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence: <http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.PDF>

## Universal Standards Information

- Report on First Draft of Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/?i=59934>

- Program Assessment Tool for Race to the Top: <http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/expectmore/index.html>

- The Web-Standards Project: <http://www.webstandards.org>

- ISTE/NETS Standards: <http://www.iste.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=NETS>

- Partnership for 21st Century Standards Skills: [http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=254&Itemid=120](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=254&Itemid=120)

- 21st Century Standards Based Curriculum: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/teach21/thebigpicture/21stCBigPicturePg2.htm>

## Canadian Connections

- OSLA Ontario School Library Association—Reading Literacy: [http://www.accessola.com/osla/bins/content\\_page.asp?cid=750-753](http://www.accessola.com/osla/bins/content_page.asp?cid=750-753)

- Research on School Libraries and Literacy Achievement: [http://www.accessola.com/osla/bins/content\\_page.asp?cid=630-639](http://www.accessola.com/osla/bins/content_page.asp?cid=630-639)

- Ontario Ministry of Education – Boys' Literacy: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/boysliteracy.html>

- Ontario Ministry of Education –Think Literacy Project: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/thinkliteracy/library.html>

- School Library Information Portal (SLIP)—Reading: [http://www.clatoolbox.ca/slip/english/School\\_Library\\_Programs/Reading/](http://www.clatoolbox.ca/slip/english/School_Library_Programs/Reading/)

- Teacher-Librarians Supporting Student Learning: [http://www.saskschools.ca/curr\\_content/teachlib/read\\_lit/readmain.htm](http://www.saskschools.ca/curr_content/teachlib/read_lit/readmain.htm)

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- American Recovery & Reinvestment Act: <http://www.recovery.gov>

- Reading Rockets—Teaching Kids to Read and Helping Those Who Struggle: <http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/professionals/librarians>

- All About Adolescent Literacy: <http://www.adlit.org>

- Online School Implements Gaming: <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=59030>

- Not going to college: How about a "career diploma" from high school: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0630/p02s18-usgn.html>

- ASCD Smartbrief articles: <http://www.smartbrief.com/service/encodeService?issueid=286F80BF-9764-46AE-A069-D21E44E25526&sid=be9ebfec-1c25-4f50-829b-cd24663daf03>

- Focus on data bolsters case for SIF: <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=60169>

- RealNetworks loses critical ruling in RealDVD case: [http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023\\_3-10307921-93.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-10307921-93.html)

- California lists state approved digital textbooks: <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=60153>

- A high school's leap from so-so to special: <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2009/jul/27/high-schools-leap-so-so-special>

- Race to the Top Guidelines announced: <http://ascd.typepad.com/blog/2009/07/race-to-the-top-begins.html>

- ED rules on ed-tech stimulus funds: <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=59920>

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- Reading Is Fundamental: [www.rif.org/parents/tips](http://www.rif.org/parents/tips)

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