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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.

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NOTEBOOK



The Best of the Best

David V. Loertscher and Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux

For our annual Best of the Best issue, we have selected some major brain teasing articles as a signpost toward thoughtful teacher librarianship.

All organizations face the reality of fast-paced change and most confront the lethargy of traditional responses that may be out of touch with a new reality. We are reminded of the recent scientific discovery of the "god" particle in physics that both reaffirms but changes much knowledge about how the universe was formed. Good science, new brain research, and the reality of global connections and competition require all of us to take a fresh look at what we are doing each day to prepare learners for a different kind of future than the one for which we were prepared in our own youth.

The value of the teacher librarian is in question in many programs. In this issue we address this concern, giving suggestions for how to position the professional teacher librarian to shine in many ways, from what you need to be involved in, to what has changed in our professional world, to what makes a winning program. Some programs are research-based and very usable; some are practice-based, with great visibility and impact. Consider implementing some of these practices and ideas as you endeavor to make your program among the best of the best, one that makes a valuable contribution to the education of your students.

We begin with a fresh reminder about the role of research—good, solid research—as the basis of our practice. We often hear that research backs this or that major idea or practice. We need to examine such claims carefully, however, and employ the same critical thinking we expect from our students. For example, we recently reviewed a research study about a new national and expensive testing system of student progress. It is being touted as the solution to keep teachers informed about student progress when, in fact, the research behind it only looked at the system itself, not whether teachers were actually using the data to inform their practice. Such "bait and switch" technique is used to convince a nation that a huge expenditure in testing is worth the investment, when its actual impact on teachers and learners is unknown. Duke, Martin, and Trice provide an excellent, informative, and very useful article defining and identifying several different types of research relevant to teacher librarians. The article explains how to evaluate research, as well as claims that practices or products are "research-based" or "research-tested." Every teacher librarian and every LIS student should read this article.

Our second major article reminds us that teacher librarians have the best chance at advocacy if they are part of a school-wide participatory culture where their worth is evident to all the players in the school. How we interact with administrators, teachers, and educational writers is defining our role. Mackley talks about a participatory culture that benefits both the learner and the teacher, where participants learn from one another and learn to value one another.

The importance of creating an all-encompassing participatory culture is a reflection of our time and is enabled, to some extent, by the extraordinary developments in communication and information technology. Doug Johnson examines this and other developments, so-called game changers, which occurred during the past twenty-five years. Johnson reminds us just how far the field has come in the past couple of decades. Many of us have witnessed these changes, some of us have played a role in them, and all of us have felt their effects.

Many of the milestones or game changers identified by Johnson are required to develop and maintain a quality school li-

brary program today. What qualities and characteristics are required for exemplary programs? Marcoux addresses that question in her article about recent winners of the School Library Program of the Year (AASL). She identifies and examines the characteristics of the winning programs as described not only by the award criteria but also by teacher librarians and others responsible for the winning programs.

Canada is presenting many resources for teacher librarians to use in their work. The best of these in 2012 are featured for your use. In many ways Canada is very advanced in thinking about teacher librarianship. Not to be missed are the lists of notable and recommended books that are compiled by two divisions of the American Library Association – the Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). Of course there is the list of the best reviewed books for this school year that annually is placed in this publication by the editors of *Teacher Librarian* – in addition to what is reviewed for this time. Each of these lists needs to be on your must-read/get list for your profes-

sional growth. Let them help advance your professional development and share them widely. Additional outstanding resources are found in Troutner's column "Web Wonders," this month featuring a potpourri of sties for professionals and students.

The "What Works" column offers insights into how real learning can and does occur in the Learning Commons – and it offers thoughts for advancing your program. Andrew Churches, who is not a teacher librarian, shares his perspective as a classroom teacher and technology leader, identifying many common and complimentary ideas, approaches, and activities. Mark Ray's "Advocacy" column addresses the unimaginable: What happens when you get what you want. This underscores the importance of and potential great benefits from advocacy of yourself, your program, and the profession.

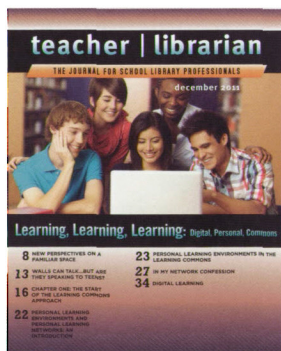
Lamb and Johnson provide another very informative and useful column about what many students (and adults) would consider the "best of the best" of the Web or of reference: Wikipedia. They try to answer the question many of us continue to ask: Is it wicked or wonderful?

WRITE FOR *TEACHER LIBRARIAN*!

The editors of *Teacher Librarian* welcome original manuscripts on any aspect of library services for children and young adults that will contribute to excellence in programs and improved support for their delivery. We are committed to collaborative partnerships for improved student learning through thought-provoking and challenging feature articles, strategies for effective advocacy, and critical analysis of management and programming issues

We invite you to share your knowledge, expertise, or research with the *Teacher Librarian* readership and the greater teacher librarian community. We encourage articles from both practitioners and library educators. Submissions will be considered for publication only if they have not been published previously and they are not under active consideration by another journal. Articles usually range in length from 2000 to 3500 words, but can be longer or shorter depending upon the needs of the topic.

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