

The School Library System Newsletter

November 2008

Pat's Desk Talk

Self-Assessment: Buzz or Benefit

One of the educational buzz phrases right now is "Self-Assessment." It goes hand-in-hand with "Authentic Assessment." Although I believe we are assessing our students to death these days, I do believe in the value of self-assessment. It is a concept I fell into with my principal at my old school. Instead of a traditional teacher assessment, we designed a document that I used to assess myself in all areas of my SLMS position. I ranked myself in these areas, jotted down notes and examples that validated why I ranked myself high or low in that area and then set goals for the upcoming year. After I was done, I made an appointment with the principal and we went over my documentation together. But self-assessment does not have to be that involved or complex.

If we are asking our students to self-assess then I believe we need to be asking ourselves to do the same. How does self-assessment apply to us as librarians? What questions should we be asking ourselves about our own performance? When is a good time to self-assess? Life is complex enough as it is so let's take the easy approach.

Our job is so unique that most administrators are not truly aware of all we do but WE know what a good library media center and program looks like. We know what we should be giving our staff and students. Of course, we need to

take into account the unique constraints of our individual situations as we ask ourselves about our job performance. There may be a vast divide between reality and the ultimate program caused by space, time, and money issues. Yet we cannot let that become an excuse for doing less. We need to ask ourselves the really tough questions: What are my priorities and what am I doing to fulfill them? What are my strengths? What are my weaknesses? Am I avoiding certain tasks or new technologies because I don't like them? Am I assigning an aide to do the job because it's the right task for them or because I don't want to learn one more thing? Is news getting out to teachers on time or are we so overworked we don't have time to build staff awareness of resources? Am I clinging to old procedures because they are comfortable? Is there a better way to do "this" and if so how do I implement it? Decide what areas of librarianship are critical to running your library. Don't make the list so long that you become overwhelmed.

When to conduct the self-assessment is very easy...anytime! Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly...you decide. It can be a mental check or a written reflection. It can take 10 minutes or two hours. You can think it through in the shower or catch a quiet moment to reflect at your desk. Simply run through your mental checklist of the most important functions in your position and ask yourself to honestly reflect on your performance. No one needs to know the results but you. Look around your library with the eyes of a newcomer: Is it inviting?

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Cluttered or Spartan? Over stimulating or too bland? Can traffic move freely or should I move some furniture for better access and use of space? Is there room for improvement? If improvement is needed, what do I need to do to reach a new level of expertise? Find a class? Read a professional book on the topic? Contact SLS for training? Rework my priorities to find time to practice new skills or share new resources? Resign from a committee that takes my time from the library? Get involved on curriculum committees so that I can make the collection a better fit to classroom needs?

Who knows better than us if our library and our program is all that it can be.



November Staff Development & Meetings

Liaison Committee Meeting

November 13, 8:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Herkimer BOCES

Also:

AASL Institute: Reading and the Elementary Librarian

March 4, 2009, Hart's Hill Inn, 8 a.m.–3
p.m.



Notes from Kenn:

REMEMBER TO SEND A REPLY!

I think it's safe to say that we were all surprised (some happily, some not) when Mother Nature gave us a taste of what's to come with snow falling during the last week of October. My reply to that was "Not yet! I'm not ready! Where did summer go?" I'm not a big fan of winter or snow, so this preview certainly didn't make me happy.

Speaking of replies...whenever you receive an ILL request from another library, please remember to send a reply to the requesting library as soon as possible letting them know if you can/cannot fill the request. Several schools have mentioned that they are sending requests and waiting several days for material to arrive that never does and they haven't received an email to say it's not available. It doesn't have to be a long reply, just something to say yes or no to filling the request. If everyone does this, no one will be left waiting and wondering and a new request can be sent if necessary. Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

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As hard as it is to believe, Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Though I'm a bit early, I'd like to wish you a Happy Thanksgiving and I hope that you will be surrounded by the love and companionship of family and friends during this holiday!



Mary's Notes:

Notes from Leatherstocking

We have another Leatherstocking Conference behind us, one that was unique in many respects. For better or worse, it is doubtful that we will ever share space with Hillary Clinton again!

All of us at SLS hope you enjoyed the conference and that you took many good ideas from the conference. If you want copies of the handouts from our keynote speaker, from Krista Hartman, or from the Math and Literature sectional, these can be found on our homepage, in the Leatherstocking Conference section.

Next year's Leatherstocking Conference is scheduled for October 28, 2009. Mark your calendars!

However you celebrate Thanksgiving, I wish you joy, full stomachs, and good dishes that are not too good to go in the dishwasher. I hope you will spend the day with people you love (or at least

tolerate well), and that your lives are filled with many, many things to be thankful for.

Happy Thanksgiving!



Notes from Anne:

Do you use Accelerated Reader for assessment? If so, you might want to find out what materials in your library are also in the Accelerated Reader database. The SLS department has a subscription to a product called MARC Wizard. One of its components is called Magic Match. Magic Match allows us to match a library's collection to the Accelerated Reader tests. I am still learning how to use Magic Match, but if you are interested, please let me know.



Did you know?

NYS Education Law regarding Instruction on Internet Safe Usage
An education law regarding instruction

Contact us:

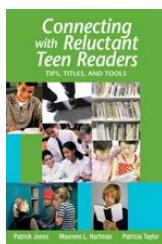
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in the safe use of the Internet was added in section 814 of the NYS Education Law. The law states that school districts in the state need to provide students in grades kindergarten through twelve with instruction designed to promote the proper and safe use of the Internet. (Amended Education Law Article 17 by adding Section 814 to Chapter 526) link: [Assembly Law A00994](#). If this link does not work, please go to the Quick Bill Search toward the bottom of the main page (<http://assembly.state.ny.us/>) and type "A00994."

NEW! NEW! NEW! ***NOVEMBER 2008*** ***SCHOOL LIBRARY SYSTEM*** ***PROFESSIONAL COLLECTION*** ***ADDITIONS***



Connecting with Reluctant Teen Readers: Tips, Titles, and Tools

Authors: Patrick Jones, Maureen L. Hartman, Patricia Taylor

Publisher: Neal-Schuman,

2006

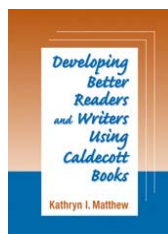
YA experts Patrick Jones, Maureen Hartman, and Patricia Taylor believe in some proven tips, titles, and tools to reach the reluctant. Examples of how to entice readers, what types of books are most likely to grab/keep their interest, and how to connect different kinds of readers with different genres. Lists include over 600 books, magazines, and series: Best Books for Struggling Middle School Readers, Best Books for Boys of All Ages, Best New Adult Fiction and Classics for Teens, Best Turn-Around

Titles that Get Non-Readers Reading, Best Magazines and Comic Books. Also included - quick and easy guidance for using booktalks (including 50 ready-to-use scripts), reading surveys, and an exhaustive bibliography of resources to consult.



DEMCO Collection Care Guide (with DVD), 2005

Lists of supplies needed to repair materials accompany this quick guide to techniques and tips for safely keeping your collection in good repair and extending the life of books. The accompanying DVD walks you through those techniques.



Developing Better Readers and Writers Using Caldecott Books

Author: Kathryn I. Matthew
Publisher: Neal-Schuman, 2006

Includes 100+ ready-to-use lesson plans and library activities, each featuring a different Caldecott Medal or Honor book. Each plan integrates the reading and writing process by introducing different forms of writing. Includes a summary of the featured book, author and illustrator information. Also, each plan offers discussion questions and a mini-lesson about the genre, type of literary device or illustration, and a structured writing exercise based on the title.

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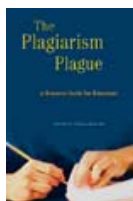
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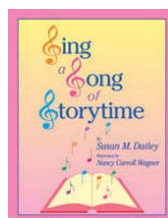
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The Plagiarism Plague: a Resource Guide and CD-ROM Tutorial for Educators and Librarians
Editor: Vibiana Bowman
Publisher: Neal-Schuman,

2004

How can students learn in a world where research papers are for sale, fraternities and sororities pull papers from filing cabinets, and librarians and educators fail to recognize plagiarism? Bowman provides insight into how schools and universities are coping with this problem, and offers detailed guidance on how to teach students to properly use published and copyrighted information. A special section on busting plagiarizers explains where students buy papers, programs for detecting plagiarism, and educational sites to get kids on the right track. Contributors give readers tips for creating instructional materials about plagiarism for the Web or class instruction. CD-ROM provides one-click access to the recommended Web-resources ready to be used for school Web sites, in-class discussion groups, or library instruction sessions. An interactive Macromedia Flash tutorial is also included for upload to library Web sites.



Sing a Song of Storytime (includes CD-ROM)

Author: Susan M. Dailey
Publisher: Neal-Schuman, 2007

Music adds an extra special element to storytime programming. And Susan Dailey is a virtuoso at helping colleagues use music creatively. A compilation of musical storytimes. In addition to the music and lyrics, there are also annotated bibliographies of picture books related to music, along with tips on how to deliver these programs.



Storytimes... Plus!

Author: Kay Lincycumb
Publisher: Neal-Schuman, 2007

Ever thought about turning storytime into a Guinea Pig Party? How about celebrating Pancake Day or investigating the real story of sneezes? That's just the beginning of the fun in this new storytime resource. Includes stories for children of varying ages, interests, and backgrounds - and a wide array of options to match preferences to the recommended books and programs. Offers 35 complete, ready-to-use storytimes with related materials and programming ideas.

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Krista's Korner

Hello everyone! Don't you wish we could have a Leatherstocking Conference every month? I always enjoy myself and learn something. For those of you who would like more copies of my "Math on the 'Net'" handout or who missed my workshop, you can find it on the MVCC Library web site at: http://www.mvcc.edu/academics/library/math_on_net.pdf I've added a few more web sites since the conference. Check it out!

Did you know that there is a Children's Poet Laureate? The Poetry Foundation named Jack Prelutsky as Poet Laureate in 2006, and this year announced that Mary Ann Hoberman is their choice. Children's Poet Laureates serve a 2-year term as official children's poetry consultant to the Foundation and receive a cash prize of \$25,000 and a medallion. My favorite books by Hoberman are her *You Read to Me, I'll Read to You* series (very short scary tales, very short Mother Goose tales, very short fairy tales, and very short stories). Check out the Poetry Foundation's children's poetry page at: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/programs/children.html> It has some interesting articles, book lists, and a children's poetry archive.

It's also time for the National Book Awards again. The finalists in the

children's literature category are: *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *The Underneath* by Kathi Appelt, *What I Saw and How I Lied* by Judy Blundell, *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* by E. Lockhart, and *The Spectacular Now* by Tim Tharp. The winner will be announced on November 19. I haven't read any of these yet, so I don't know who to root for. What about you?

Speaking of awards, are any of you doing Mock Caldecott or Mock Newbery contests in your schools? Some libraries have Mock Caldecott or Newbery clubs or reading groups or blogs. It's a fun way to get students involved in evaluating literature. If you've never done it, here are two lesson plans that will help you.

Mock Caldecott Program:
<http://www.informationliteracy.org/plans/view/227>
Start Your Engines—a Mock Caldecott Introduction:
<http://www.informationliteracy.org/plans/view/658/>

ALA also publishes a guidebook called *Newbery and Caldecott Mock Elections* by Kathleen Simonetta, Nancy Hackett and Linda Ward Callaghan (Association for Library Service to Children, 2001, 56 p., \$18.00), which you can purchase through Amazon.

For an interesting look at children's authors who have pushed the limits of what is acceptable in children's literature, see Syracuse University's new

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exhibit “Raising Rebels: An Exhibition of Radical Children’s Literature”: <http://library.syr.edu/digital/exhibits/r/RadicalChildLit/> Some of the authors in it surprised me (Lois Lenski, a radical?), so I think you’ll enjoy it.

You may also enjoy two picture books I found to be outstanding recently. Eve Bunting is well known for writing picture books dealing with difficult social topics, such as homelessness, divorce, adoption, and gangs. In *Walking to School* she goes back to her Irish roots to tell us a story about a young Catholic girl in modern-day Northern Ireland who endures harassment by Protestants while walking through their neighborhood to get to school. It’s a sad story that carries a note of hope, and is sure to create discussion in the classroom. Emily Arnold McCully brings us the story of how the America’s first school for the deaf, later to become known as Gallaudet University, was founded. In *My Heart Glow: Alice Cogswell, Thomas Gallaudet, and the Birth of American Sign Language*, McCully describes how Gallaudet went to France to learn sign language so that he could teach young Alice Cogswell how to communicate using sign. It’s a story I hadn’t heard before, and it left me wanting to read more about Alice.

Until next time, Happy Reading!!
Krista =^..^=



Best Wishes for a holiday season filled with laughter, warmth, and good food. I am particularly thankful this year for my job, for the wonderful librarians I am able to work with, and for my ever incredible family. With the state of the world and the economy, now is the time to count our blessings so that we don’t forget the goodness in our lives.

Happy, Happy Thanksgiving to you all!
Pat Skelly



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