

2015-2016 Library Curriculum Report

Books and stories are at the core of what we do in library class, throughout all grades. The read-aloud is the foundation and springboard for deep learning, forming connections, and launching important conversations on a range of topics. Read-alouds are entertaining to students and a wonderful way to connect them to great stories, new language, and authors that they can grow up with.

Furthermore, the picture book is an amazing medium for the development of many literacies. We talk equally about the text, the illustrations and the design elements of the books. Megan Dowd Lambert, a librarian and scholar, describes the picture book as “a multimodal art form (one that uses both visual and verbal modes of communication.)” She also describes the experience as reading picture books *with* children, not *to* children, and that “children’s active participation in making meaning of all they see and hear during a picture book reading takes precedence over moving through the pages at the pace of the adult’s oral reading of the text” (M. Dowd Lambert in *Reading Picture Books With Children*).

We explore a picture book *together*, with little expectation of outcomes. I may have some plans and intentions for reading a picture book with students, but a great picture book will draw out unique and disparate responses from students. They are drawing from their own experiences, knowledge, and their openness to new concepts and worlds. This makes the picture book a perfect format for the creation of rich dialogue. I am constantly surprised and impressed by the student’s ability to extract so much from a picture book, and often they see things that I had not noticed in my many readings of a picture book.

Some essential and guiding questions ran through our readings and discussions this year:

How do books and stories impact you and your community?

What are some of your favorite books? And why?

What is the value and purpose of the library, to you and the greater world? What do people use libraries for?

What is it like to be an author or illustrator?

How do illustrations support and enhance a picture book?

How can you care for books and libraries?

Below you will find an overview of the work that each group or grade band completed in library class, and the ways in which we responded to the essential questions listed above.

Nursery & Kindergarten:

- Young students became acclimated to the library space. They began to learn what's available in the library and to seek out stories and information that interests them. There was a focus on smooth transitions: classroom to library, story to browsing and check-out, library to classroom.
- Story read-alouds were chosen to support thematic studies in the classrooms, themes around seasons or events, and animals.
- In the spring, we embarked upon a literary study of "trickster tales." Each week we read and discussed one or two trickster stories, comparing elements and versions. I chose a mix of traditional folk stories from the United States and elsewhere, and modern stories that incorporate trickster elements.

First Grade:

- We built upon the foundations set in Nursery and Kindergarten; establishing routines, supporting transitions, locating books in the collection, and taking care of the library and library books. There is more of an emphasis placed on helping first graders to locate "just-right" books: books that support their interests, curiosities, and emergent reading skills.
- In December, we prepared for our Caldecott Medal Election by reading and evaluating thirteen recent picture books. The study culminated in a school-wide mock election in January, and an unveiling of the official Caldecott Medal winners. We deeply study the books, focusing on:
 - the quality and technique of the illustrations
 - the impact of illustrations on our understanding of the story
 - how well the story and illustrations support one another
- In February, we discussed and shared many of our favorite books together.
- In April, in honor of National Poetry Month, I shared some poetry picture books, and the students had access to wonderful poetry books to borrow and read together.

Second and Third Grades:

- We began the year talking about how we care for books and the library. We delved a little deeper in their understanding of how items are organized in the collection, with a focus on using the online catalog to search for books, using a title or a keyword.
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 - the quality and technique of the illustrations
 - the impact of illustrations on our understanding of the story
 - how well the story and illustrations support one another
- We discussed the value and power of libraries on individuals and communities, by reading about real libraries and events all around the world.
 - *Hands Around the Library: Protecting Egypt's Treasured Books* by Karen Leggett Abouraya. This story is a true account of how a large group of people protected the National Library in Alexandria, Egypt during the recent revolution.
 - *The Librarian on the Roof* by M.G. King. This is another true story of a children's librarian who protested the lack of funding for public libraries by camping out on the roof of her public library for a week.
 - *Ron's Big Mission* by Rose Blue. This is a true story of a young African-American child who protests his public library's policy to not loan books to African-Americans during the time of his childhood: 1950's South Carolina. He took a stand and made a lasting impact. The young boy is Ronald McNair, who grows up to be a NASA astronaut, going on several missions, before losing his life in the Challenger explosion.
 - *Waiting for the Biblioburro* by Monica Brown. A true story of a Columbian librarian who travels to the rural areas to give kids access to literature. His small library lives on the back of a burro.
- In February, we discussed and shared many of our favorite books together, and we talked about what stories and books mean to us. Some texts that we read are:
 - *City Dog, Country Frog* by Mo Willems
 - *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* by William Joyce
 - *Billy's Booger* by William Joyce
 - *Ideas are All Around* by Philip C. Stead
 - *The Whisper* by Pamela Zagarenski

- In April, we studied poetry. We began with a close reading of Lewis Carroll's *The Jabberwocky*. We read some haiku poetry together and discussed the form. The students used that information to go outside and use their surroundings and their senses to create their own haiku poems. Throughout the month, the library displays are filled with poetry books, and the students have time to explore them. Many second and third graders shared poems that they found, or poems that they wrote, at the poetry assembly at the end of the month.

Fourth Grade:

- We began the year by revisiting some basic library skills, such as finding a book using the online catalog and understanding the Dewey Decimal Classification system.
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 - the quality and technique of the illustrations
 - the impact of illustrations on our understanding of the story
 - how well the story and illustrations support one another
- Book Talk Video Presentations. We studied examples of book talks, or book commercials, understanding the elements that go into a great book talk. The students researched the books and authors, and designed their own book talks, based on a favorite book of theirs. The book talk presentations were filmed and shared amongst the groups.
- In April, we studied poetry: "The Jabberwocky," exquisite corpse poetry writing, emotion poems (inspired by the book *My Cold Plum Lemon Pie Bluesy Mood*). Throughout the month, the library displays are filled with poetry books, and the students have time to explore them. Many second and third graders shared poems that they found, or poems that they wrote, at the poetry assembly at the end of the month.

Fifth and Sixth Grades:

- We began the year by revisiting some basic library skills, such as finding a book using the online catalog and understanding the Dewey Decimal Classification system.
- In December, we prepared for our Caldecott Medal Election by reading and evaluating thirteen recent picture books. The study culminated in a school-wide mock election in

January, and the unveiling of the official Caldecott Medal winners. We deeply study the books, focusing on:

- the quality and technique of the illustrations
- the impact of illustrations on our understanding of the story
- how well the story and illustrations support one another

- **Book Talk Video Presentations.** We studied examples of book talks, or book commercials, understanding the elements that go into a great book talk. The students researched the books and authors, and designed their own book talks, based on a favorite book of theirs. The book talk presentations were filmed and shared amongst the groups.
- **In April, we studied poetry:** “The Jabberwocky,” exquisite corpse poetry writing, false apology poems (inspired by William Carlos Williams’s famous poem “This is Just To Say”), and poems created out of book spine text.

Book Club:

The fifth and sixth grade book club was very active and well-attended this year. We met for an hour once a month to have lunch and discuss a book. This is a voluntary activity and the participation varies from month to month. Jen Curyto, language arts specialist, and I helped to facilitate, although the students don’t need much to spark great conversations about books. This is a safe and positive space to learn from one another and test out theories and interpretations of a story. The books we read and discussed are:

The Jumbies by Tracey Baptiste

When You Reach Me by Rebecca Stead

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman

The London Eye Mystery by Siobhan Dowd

Masterminds by Gordon Korman

Mini-Courses & Choice Time:

Mini-courses are an excellent opportunity to build relationships with students and interact with them in new settings and ways. In the fall, Diane and I offered a “Codes and Code-Breaking” mini-course to fifth and sixth graders. We studied known codes and ciphers, like the Morse Code and Caesar Cipher. The students created their own codes and ciphers. The mini-course culminated in a student-created scavenger hunt, using all of the skills and codes learned. In the winter, Marie and I hosted a board games mini-course for students in second through sixth grades. This spring, I am supporting twelve sixth-graders in the design and construction of the annual Miquon Yearbook.

Throughout the year, the library was open to students during lunch choice. Many students use the library to read, play cards and other games, draw, write, compose music (on Noteflight software) and program (using Scratch). I occasionally held a “Maker Monday” program, where I would provide materials and plans for arts & crafts and building projects. Some examples were paper airplane making, origami, bookmark making, building with plastic cups and other materials, and lego building. I plan to expand this program next year.

It has been a fantastic and rewarding year! I have witnessed the growth of the students in so many ways, particularly in developing as readers and lovers of literature. I will be sharing Summer Reading lists shortly, and hope that students get a chance to read some of the choices. Don't forget that the local public libraries have fabulous summer events, including a summer reading program. Have a wonderful summer, and happy reading!