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Teaching Librarian
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**TingL mission**

The *Teaching Librarian* (TingL) is the official magazine of the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA). It is published three times a year to support OSLA members in providing significant and effective library programs and services. *The Teaching Librarian* promotes library programs and curriculum development that furthers exemplary educational objectives. The magazine fosters effective collaboration within the school library community and provides a forum to share experience and expertise.

**TingL guidelines**

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Articles of 150-250 words, 500 words, or 800-1,300 words are welcome. Articles, when approved, should be accompanied by good quality illustrations and/or pictures whenever possible. Text must be sent electronically, preferably in a Microsoft Word (or compatible) file. Pictures can be printed or digital (minimum size and quality are 4” x 6” and 300 dpi, approximately 700 MB and in .jpeg format, if electronic).

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**OLA design works**

Annesha Hutchinson
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The closing keynote for the Ontario Library Association’s 2016 Super Conference was Wab Kinew. If you are not familiar with this important Canadian, his biography (from his website, www.wabkinew.ca) states: Wab Kinew (pron: WOB ka-NOO) is a one-of-a-kind talent, named by the National Post as “an aboriginal leader seeking to engage with Canadians at large.” He is the Associate Vice-President for Indigenous Relations at the University of Winnipeg and the author of the national bestseller The Reason You Walk: A Memoir. In 2014, Wab successfully defended Joseph Boyden’s The Orenda on CBC’s Canada Reads literary competition. In 2012, he hosted the acclaimed documentary series 8th Fire. His hip-hop music and journalism projects have won numerous awards. He has a BA in Economics, is completing a Master’s degree in Indigenous Governance and is a member of the Midewin. Wab is also an Honourary Witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Wab’s keynote was not a “feel-good” talk. He was frank about the culpability of libraries and schools for promoting cultural genocide and obscuring the fact-finding mission of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Yet, the most powerful portion of his speech described how his father “adopted” the Catholic Archbishop of Winnipeg as part of his father’s healing process. Much wrong was done to Wab’s father, a residential school survivor, yet part of his own healing process involved forgiving and embracing the spiritual descendant of the source of his pain.

Instead of contributing to society’s problems, libraries could and should be part of the solutions. The theme of this issue of The Teaching Librarian, “Healing @ Your Library”, suggests the potential. We are delighted to have Amy Mathers, the namesake of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre Amy Mathers Teen Book Award (see amysmarathonofbooks.ca) write a feature article on the role of literature for self-understanding and hope. May this issue help you heal others and help your own healing, from wounds of a physical, emotional, spiritual or any other nature.

“The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.”

Marianne Williamson
During the last year, the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA) has been busy with a number of new and ongoing initiatives. As we build capacity within our division, collaboration and advocacy continue to be important threads that connect our work to broader library sectors and beyond. We are grateful for the unwavering support of the Ontario Library Association (OLA). This year as president of OSLA, I was privy to the important work that the OLA Board of Directors undertakes on behalf of all the divisions. I also experienced first-hand the time commitment of OSLA Council, voting and nonvoting members, including all dedicated school library advocates, some of whom come from far reaches of Ontario. The membership thanks you for all your hard work!

In an effort to reach out to new members, OLA agreed to a trial period of offering free OLA memberships to teachers taking their Librarianship Part One Additional Qualification courses. We are pleased to report that this initiative has resulted in a 10% success rate for the year. At our peak we were 1,409 strong!

The collaboration between the Ministry, OSLA and The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario (TALCO) was interrupted by job action. This initiative to create an inquiry based learning resource, to support the Getting Started with Student Inquiry Ministry monograph that is part of the Capacity Building Series, has been resurrected. With this resource, we hope to establish a direct link between school library programs and the inquiry learning process, thereby highlighting how learning is amplified when it happens in a rich print and digital collaborative learning environment that is inherent in the library learning commons.

OSLA Council has also continued to pursue communication with People for Education (P4E) to explore links between school library programs and P4E’s research around their Measuring What Matters initiative. David Cameron, the lead researcher for P4E was a key note speaker for Treasure Mountain Canada 4 (TMC), a symposium that was part of the OLA Super Conference this year. OLA and OSLA worked with Carol Koechlin to find a home for TMC when the CLA Conference was cancelled. We thank Carol for leading the charge in this endeavour. Carol and David Loertscher have also been instrumental in initiating the Year of the Learning Commons. OSLA supports this initiative and encourages members to use the hashtag #yearlc and to contribute to the Year of the Learning Commons Showcase. This presents an excellent opportunity for educators to highlight the amazing work that is happening in Ontario school libraries.

Other outreach efforts have been undertaken. Work by teacher-librarians across Ontario has been highlighted by TV Ontario on their Teach Ontario platform www.teachontario.ca and two book talks relevant to issues that pertain to current teaching practices in the library learning commons have been hosted by the same TV Ontario site. Also, discussions have been initiated looking into the possibility of establishing a line of communication to Ontario school principals who, as we know, play a key role in school library advocacy. OSLA continues to have representation on the Subject/Division Association, OTF Curriculum forum and the Student Success Round Table. Once again, due to job action, meetings were cancelled so there is nothing to report on this front. In the spring of 2015, the OSLA President had a booth at the Faculties of Education Curriculum Forum held at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Important connections were established, one of which resulted in a presentation to teacher candidates enrolled in the Faculty of Education program at Brock University. The teacher candidates were surprised to see how connecting to a teacher librarian could benefit them in their practicums and were also intrigued by the potential

President’s Report

Jeanne Conte

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that librarianship might have for their future career choices.

For the second consecutive year, OLA organized a day at Queen’s Park. Representation for all divisional councils resulted in another successful event. OSLA is following up with liaisons that were established with MPPs and Policy Advisors on that day.

There are some changes in the works. OLA has a new website that looks fantastic and is much more user friendly. Please be sure to also visit the OSLA page located at www.accessola.com under Divisions. Here you will have access to information about matters pertaining to our association including curriculum support in the form of webinars, library documents, curriculum support documents, as well as the names of this year’s award winners and new and returning OSLA Council members. Also of note is a newly created committee to assist with content management for the T4L website. Together for Learning remains active as a living document and can be accessed on the OLA website or directly at www.togetherforlearning.ca. We thank Anita Brooks Kirkland for her diligence in creating and maintaining the website until now.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of departing council members, Heather Yearwood and Anna Szumilas as well as the work of past president, Deb Kitchener who also served on council prior to her presidency.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as the OSLA President. I look forward to serving as past president this year.
According to my Concise Oxford Dictionary, healing means restoring a person or injured part to health, or curing a person or wound. On the surface, this would suggest a book buzz focusing on the kinds of information found in the applied science section of the library and found in useful references such as Gray’s Anatomy of the Human Body (www.bartleby.com/107) or The Public Health Agency of Canada’s website (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca). However, the recent release of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (www.trc.ca/website/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890) has led me to think of healing in a more holistic way, as an issue of restoring healthy relationships between human beings, within communities, and between human beings and the environment. The titles that follow offer a variety of perspectives on “healing” in that holistic sense.

**Child Soldier — When Boys and Girls Are Used in War**  
Jessica Dee Humphreys and Michel Chikwanine; Illustrated by Claudia Dávila  
_Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2015_  
ISBN 9781771381260

More than thirty years after independence, the Congo had not yet recovered from the wounds inflicted by its colonial past. Amidst the political turmoil in the mid-1990s, Michel Chikwanine was kidnapped by a rebel army and initiated into its ranks by being drugged and forced to kill his best friend. He escaped and returned to his family but they continued to be subjected to attack because of his father’s political activism. Six years after fleeing to Uganda as a refugee, Michel gained asylum in Canada with his mother and one sister. Another sister disappeared and his father was poisoned by his enemies in Uganda. This memoir, in the form of a graphic novel written for ten to fourteen-year-olds, explains how a heartbroken refugee faced with the challenges of a life in a new country was able to heal by sharing his inspirational story of hope.
A Cree Healer and His Medicine Bundle: Revelations of Indigenous Wisdom—Healing Plants, Practices, and Stories
David Young, Robert Rogers and Russell Willier
ISBN 9781583949030

Russell Willier is a Cree healer from the Sucker Creek Reserve in Northern Alberta. This book, created in collaboration with David Young and Robert Rogers, bridges the physical and spiritual concepts of healing. It documents the plants found in Willier’s medicine bundle (and their uses) while also explaining the cultural context of traditional medicine practices. One is reminded that Willier is part of an evolving culture when it is decided that pizza, rather than heart, moose nose and tongue, should be thrown on the fire in a special ceremony offering food to young people who have died. This book would provide useful insights for teachers and senior students wanting to learn about a practitioner of traditional healing in the contemporary world.

Healing the Bruises
Lori Morgan; illustrated by Kathy Kaulbach
Halifax, Formac Publishing Company Ltd., 2014
ISBN 9781459502833

This is a first person account of a young girl’s experiences as she moves from a home where her mother is physically abused by her father into a shelter where she participates in a support program called “Healing the Bruises.” She reveals the fears that come from living in a house where there is domestic violence. She describes the experience of leaving behind her abusive father as well as her friends and her school. She also talks about making new friends, getting help from supportive councillors and eventually moving to a new home where she feels safe and where she is able to reconnect with her best friend. This 32 page picture book could be a source of guidance and hope for children affected by domestic violence and peers who are worried about their friends.

Indigenous Healing: Exploring Traditional Paths
Rupert Ross
Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2014
ISBN 9780143191100

This is a highly readable resource for senior level students and for teachers of all grades seeking an understanding of indigenous peoples in a Canadian context. Rupert Ross shares the Teachings that he has received and reports on his own experiences that illuminate those teachings. He explains how a traditional world view that sees all things relationally defines successful approaches to justice and healing. He contrasts the isolating effect of a punitive justice system with effective approaches to healing based on traditional beliefs about the necessity of finding one’s place and responsibilities within Creation.

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A former member of an Aboriginal gang involved in dealing drugs narrates this graphic novel in which he shares his story with a group of participants in a healing circle. His process of healing involves learning how a history of colonization was responsible for undermining his culture and family and denying him essential supports. In the “In Search of Your Warrior” program at a healing centre, he acts out the historical experiences of his people, maps his family tree, participates in ceremonies and realizes the necessity of forgiving himself and accepting his responsibilities to his family, community and creator. In this way he can escape the cycle of suffering that led to the lonely death of his mother and threatened to consume his younger brother. He tells other members of the healing circle that the path to healing is not easy but he ends with the optimistic promise, “every day gets a bit easier.”

Nobody understands why Tori has shaved her head or why she explodes with anger. Her parents and friends seem unable to help her as she copes with a bad breakup that seems to have undermined all of her relationships. Healing begins when she volunteers at a shelter for battered women and discovers a bond with a little girl who has taken refuge there with her mother. In a crisis, Tori demonstrates heroic strength and determination but this is only one step in a healing process that cannot be completed until after Tori acknowledges how she herself has been victimized, realizes she is not alone, and acts to protect herself and others from further abuse. In the final chapter, “Mend: to patch up” she realizes, “Courage isn’t just about being brave for someone else; it’s being brave with someone else.”

A young boy’s mother dies during the night, but for him she is only dead when he wakes up in the morning and his struggle to preserve her memory begins. From the first page the words and illustrations in this book communicate the isolation and worries of a grieving boy. He comes to terms with his loss with the help of a grandmother who shows him how he can remember the enduring nearness of his mother’s love; as a result, the wound that reminds him of his loss can heal, leaving the metaphorical scar from the title. This 32 page picture book intended for a kindergarten to grade four audience is a poignant account of loss and the gradual process of healing.
A Year of Borrowed Men
Michelle Barker; Illustrations by Renné Benoit
Toronto: Pajama Press, 2015
ISBN 9781927485835

War is probably the worst ailment to afflict mankind and the cure, suggested by A Year of Borrowed Men, is the recognition of our common humanity. This picture book for six to nine-year-olds tells the true story of three French prisoners of war working on a German farm during World War II. Despite the less than hospitable treatment of prisoners dictated by the state, the German farm wife, her five children and the prisoners learn to see each other as friends, sharing some of the challenges that highlight their humanity and some of the small joys that can be salvaged in a war-ravaged world.
Meet the Author

ALLAN STRATTON

Hats off to author Allan Stratton for the success of his latest Red Maple-nominated novel, The Dogs. The Dogs has been sold in fourteen different countries, and is nominated for the 2016 Carnegie Medal. Allan’s previous White Pine-nominated novels include Borderline (2011), Chanda’s War (2009), Chanda’s Secrets (2005), and Leslie’s Journal (2002).

TingL: You have had a longstanding and prolific career as an actor, award-winning playwright and author. What led you to focus on writing Young Adult novels?

I personally don’t use the term “Young Adult” novels or “Women’s” novels or “Gay” novels, et cetera. I think novels are novels and mine happen to have teen protagonists. The reason for that is pure serendipity. I started my career as an actor because I didn’t think I could make a living as an author. But when my 1980 farce Nurse Jane Goes To Hawaii became a widely produced hit, I turned to writing fulltime. The Etobicoke School of the Arts asked me to teach playwriting for one class a week. I loved working with the kids and got my papers, thinking I could write and teach at the same time. Ha ha. after a few years as drama head, I realized I had no time to do what I loved most, so I quit and went back to writing fulltime. The voice of a teen character in a ‘wrinkly’ novel caught the attention of Rick Wilks at Annick Press. He commissioned me to write Leslie’s Journal. Its success led to Chanda’s Secrets and now, without any planning at all, life finds me doing this interview.

If I hadn’t been a playwright would I have been asked to teach? If I hadn’t taught would I have ended up writing teen voices? Who knows? So much of what happens in life is chance. It’s what makes the ride so exciting.

I have personally enjoyed reading your YA novels — Leslie’s Journal, Chanda’s Secrets, Borderline and The Dogs in particular. They deal with such a wide range of subjects. Can you share a bit about how your creative process works? How or where do your story ideas start?

Stories come from everywhere. For instance, the kernel for The Dogs came from life: my mom was abused by my father and fled to my grandparents’ farm when I was a baby. By contrast, Chanda’s Wars came from a dream. Chanda’s Secrets had just come out, and I had a nightmare about a village on fire. I woke up as Chanda, thinking, “Soly and Iris have been kidnapped. I have to save them.”

I mull an idea for months, teasing out characters and narrative threads. I work it like an actor, asking for each character: “What do I want? How am I going to get it?” That gets me inside their heads. When I hit inconsistencies, I ask, “Why would I do this if I’ve done that?” Either I figure out a reason or I make changes to one or both narrative threads.

Eventually an outline sorts itself out, but it’s more a safety net than anything else. As I improvise each scene on the keyboard, characters come alive in unexpected ways and I follow their lead. Sometimes new characters appear out of nowhere. For instance, Mr. Sinclair wasn’t in the outline for The Dogs and initially only showed up because I figured that Cameron and his Mom must be renting the farm from somebody. It was quite a while before I realized that given his age he’d have been a boy when Jacky was; and that discovery changed so much. It’s why I think writing is a marriage of logic and inspiration.

Anyway, each day of my first draft, I re-read what I’ve written over the previous few days, editing and re-editing, to get me back into the world. During this period I’ll read new material aloud to my husband and one or two friends for comment. (I strongly advise students to read their work aloud. I read my work aloud to myself while editing, too, for rhythm and flow.)
When a draft is done I send it to my editor(s). Their best notes aren’t prescriptive; rather they’ll ask questions or point out inconsistencies. Most notes make instant sense. My editor(s) and I discuss those that don’t; sometimes the problem isn’t what the editor has diagnosed, but is a symptom of a different problem. After I’ve organized my thoughts on how to deal with the ripple effects of changes, I do a methodical revision, submit it, get additional notes, and so forth until the text is set.

Your novels have tackled themes and issues that are so important to today’s teenagers. Do you approach your fiction with social issues in mind?

No. I always start with character and story and let the themes emerge on their own. As a gay kid, growing up in small town Ontario during the 1950s and 60s, I knew I had to live a lie to survive. That’s probably why all my novels deal with secrets and identity, and why I connect on a visceral level to stories rooted in social (in)justice.

Are there any lessons or insights that you would like your young readers to take away?

Gosh no. Literature is a conversation between writers and readers of all ages. I hope readers think about the way characters deal with the situations that confront them, and wonder how they might handle the challenges. Novels are a forum for emotional exploration; they foster empathy by having readers think inside the heads of people different than themselves. They’re not about “telling” but, rather, self-discovery.

What kind of research do you do, say, for a story like *Chanda’s Secrets*?

For detail, I went to Francistown, Botswana, saw all the locations I used in the novel, and met with families, spirit doctors and local HIV/AIDS organizations. When a draft of the novel was complete, I gave it to subSaharan friends to vet for accuracy.

But the main research involved mining my memory. I knew the fear, shame and secrecy of HIV/AIDS, because I’d buried a generation of friends in New York in the early nineteen-eighties. I was also raised by a single mother: when writing about Chanda and Mama, I’d ask myself: “What would Mom do for me? What would I do for her?”
Speaking of *Chanda’s Secrets*, (nominated for a 2004 White Pine award) in 2010 it was made into the award-winning film *Life, above All*. The film premiered at the Cannes International Film Festival, and subsequently was South Africa’s entry for Best Foreign film at the 2011 Oscars. Can you tell our readers a bit about what that experience was like?

Walking the red carpet and the standing ovation at Cannes — *Time Magazine* clocked it at ten minutes — was an out of body experience. And being on the film set in Elandsdoorn, a couple of hours from Johannesburg, was pure magic. For photos and commentary about both, go to my blog (http://allanstratton.blogspot.com) The film shoot posts start December 5, 2009. The Cannes posts are in April 2010.

Of your own YA books, do you have a personal favorite or one that holds a special meaning to you?

Well… I call my books “brain babies” because they come out of my head. Some do better than others, but like any good parent I give equal care and attention to each one and don’t have favourites — at least in public.

You were still in high school when James Reaney published your play *The Rusting Heart* in the literary journal *Alphabet*, and CBC broadcast it as a radio play. Do you have any suggestions for teachers/librarians to help encourage and engage young people to write (and to read!)?

Beginning writers usually only scratch the surface of their story and characters. So do a version of the Expert Game. Have them read their story and then have the class ask questions about the parts that interest them the most. For instance, for idea one above: “Which of your old friends do you miss most? Why? Describe your favourite room on your jet.” Because it’s the student’s imaginary world, the student is always right. In other words, the questions must never be about tripping up the student, but rather about prompting the student to flesh out the details. They create space for mental improvisations. In addition, they help kids develop an ability to think on their feet. (Once you model how to question, you can have kids question each other in groups of five.)

As for reading: Remember when you were in high school “dissecting” Shakespeare? Did that make you want to read...
plays? No kidding. Literary analysis is like vivisecting a brain to find out how it thinks.

It’s good to know the meaning of literary terms like metaphor, symbol and theme. But these grow out of a story; they aren’t its focus. (For instance, the only reason *The Tempest* has water imagery is because it’s set on an island after a storm.) So sure, point out literary techniques, but don’t dwell on them.

What’s interesting in literature is also what’s most important: characters in conflict. Get kids discussing: “Who is your favourite character? Why?” “What would you have done in their situation? Why?” Get them thinking about the things you think about when reading a great book. Provide the prompts and you’ll have them.

I also strongly suggest that teachers read aloud, especially to weak students. If students struggle to figure out the words, they can no more enjoy a story than a moviegoer can enjoy a film projected on a cluttered wall with a soundtrack obscured by static. They give up because it’s frustrating. Your voice unlocking the magic on the page can provide the motivation for them to acquire your skill.

One other thing: when choosing a novel, consider interline and chapter length. An endless, tightly-crammed wall of words is daunting. Personally, I’ve always checked the number of pages in the next chapter before putting a book down. If they’re not too long, I think: “Just a little bit more, just a little bit more,” till I’ve devoured the whole thing. It’s the same with most readers.

**Congratulations again on *The Dogs*, sold to fourteen countries and nominated for the Red Maple Award and the Carnegie Medal. What is involved in the process of bringing books to the foreign market? Translations? Different book covers? Will you be travelling to some of those countries?**

Books are sold by publishers and agents at international book fairs. (London and Frankfurt are huge, and there’s a major one for Children’s and YA in Bologna.) Each acquiring publisher does its own translation. Sometimes they come up with their own cover, but other times they buy the rights to another publisher’s. If you go to my website, www.allanstratton.com, you can see a wide range of *Chanda’s Secrets* covers, whereas, to date, publishers for *The Dogs* have used one of two designs.

And yes, I’ve been lucky to travel a lot for *The Dogs*. Since last spring, I’ve done presentations in Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, the United States and Canada. I really enjoy presenting at conferences, conventions and in the classroom.

**Thank you, Allan.**
Reading Nonfiction: Notice & Note Stances, Signposts, and Strategies
by Kylene Beers & Robert E. Probst
Heinemann, 2016
A thorough analysis of nonfiction, for teachers of all grade levels and subjects, outlining various scaffolding techniques to help students decode, question and engage in nonfiction reading.

When Kylene Beers and Robert Probst decide to take on a topic, like the entire genre of nonfiction, they fully immerse themselves. They make discoveries, think deeply about words and definitions, reflect humbly on the effectiveness of their lessons as they try their strategies out on unappreciative students and share their clarified insights from their journey with us, improving our practice along the way.

Reading Nonfiction is structured like a huge target, as you move closer to the centre of the target the scaffolding increases, so you can pick and choose lessons based on the needs of your students. Although the demonstration lessons and responses outlined are all whole class, there is nothing to stop you from using a strategy with a group of students to support their individual needs. Beers and Probst recognize that our students know more than they, and sometimes we, think. Increased scaffolding helps students "see deeply into texts – so that their smart thinking…and feelings of competence can emerge."

On the outside ring, Beers and Probst outline ten specific issues in the teaching and processing of nonfiction, reiterating over and over again, that our goal is to create "independent learners," able to independently access texts. Our teaching should not create "ready-made victims of the cult leaders, political manipulators, and commentators offering their views thinly disguised as news." Our lesson should provide the skills students need to access the nuances and manipulations used by nonfiction authors so students can question and confirm information.

The next ring in the target are the three stances or major questions which students reflect on when reading. The stances are: What surprised me; What did the author think I already knew; and what challenged, changed or confirmed what I already knew? These three questions put the student at the centre of their reading having them reflect on their experience while reading it. Their answers provide the keys to discussions, along with identification of what the author did to make the text confusing for the student taking the responsibility of not-understanding off the students’ shoulders, allowing students to extend their knowledge base. These important questions engage students in their reading and learning.

Signposts are generalizations of what authors do to draw you into their text. The five signposts are Contrasts and Contradictions, Extreme or Absolute Language, Numbers and Stats, Quoted Words and Word Gaps. Each of these signposts is accompanied by an anchoring question to keep the student focused on the text, engaging them in tactics used, and with time, inferring the reasons behind them.

Finally, at the centre of the nonfiction target are the specific strategies. We know that good readers automatically process text without thinking. These strategies are designed to make these processes visible to students and ourselves since many of us are often unconscious of how we read. Using these lessons before, during and after reading to provide chances for students to re-read and talk about the text reinforcing their comprehension.

No matter where your students’ or school’s needs fall in this nonfiction target, Reading Nonfiction is a rewarding read. You feel like you are learning from people who know the realities of our classrooms, students, and political climate. You feel like you are privy to their deep thinking. You also see proven
practices embedded into the lessons. Beers and Probst put students at the centre of learning by reinforcing the importance of student-led discussions, the belief in our students need to read to gain reading skills and the repetition of instruction through guided lessons.

**Mathematical Mindset**
by Jo Boaler
ISBN 978-0-470-89452-1

A resource designed to develop an understanding of how high-level mathematical thinking can be accessible to everyone if only we let go of our deeply embedded math misconceptions.

Ironically, the people who pick up this book won’t be the people who need it the most. If you already feel you aren’t a math person, why would you read a math-based professional resource? But everyone, mathematically empowered or not, should read this one.

Jo Boaler believes everyone is “capable of excelling at math” and approaches this issue from two sides. First, based on much research, she debunks the many math misconceptions we, as teachers, students and parents, carry. These ideas, such as, some people are math people, speed is essential when calculating, good math students don’t struggle, and math is an independent activity, paired with the system of tracking lower level math students leads people to negative math outlook.

These misconceptions go against Boaler’s core belief of what math is and after giving math the distinction of being the subject with the highest level of fixed mindset, she and other professionals decided math as a subject needed a change. This change is Jo Boaler’s battle. Math, she explains, is a very visual subject where mathematicians should have the time and freedom to deeply explore and question patterns seen in the world with the use of group work to build and extend ideas is an essential part of the process. Her argument is that the teaching of math in public schools is so different from the reality of math at higher levels, that the students who should be studying math never get a chance to get there. She even provides examples of people who went on to become mathematicians but were considered "bad" at math in their elementary and secondary school years.

To help us overcome this issue she provides research-based solutions to build a new mathematical culture.

Problem solving should use “low floor (read accessible by everyone), high ceiling (read extend to high levels) activities”, which reflect real life and embed group work into the process. We need a culture of exploration created through the use manipulatives and drawing to visualize problems. A transformation of mistakes as something desirable and the basis of growth needs to occur. Homework should be reflective, building understanding, and allowing students to communicate and defend their findings. Formulas and theories can be introduced to a problem when necessary to help students see their relevance. There are tales distributed throughout the book of people who have cried at various workshops Boaler has run, as they realize that the math-shaming they have lived with didn’t need to happen.

Having resources you can immediately use in your classroom to apply to your new understandings is always a strong feature and this book is full of them. The appendices provide many full-page, ready-to-use tasks, exit tickets, self-assessment and reflection sheets, along with references to apps and websites which support the development of a mathematical mindset.

Another important, referenced resource is Youcubed.org. Youcubed is an open site based out of Stanford University and co-founded by Jo Boaler herself. It contains research, articles, videos and many teacher resources to support the theories put forth in Mathematical Mindsets. A gold mine of ideas is right at your fingertips. You can even apply...
for the free MOOC course if you wish to take the time to explore higher level math concepts.

If you feel you don't have time to read the whole book, Chapter Nine is an overview of the basic ideas that run through the book. A professional book club could start with a reading of this chapter, and then members could then decide which areas in their class or school need the most attention.

Although this book is math-based, many of the major principals outlined apply to building wonder, creativity, and openness to learning in any subject. Creating an environment that sees mistakes as the basis for learning, building group-work skills so students feel supported and part of a community, the limiting effects of grading on student self-esteem and the overall belief that students are worth believing in should be enough for any educator to invest in this worthwhile text.

_Pure Genius: Building a Culture of Innovation and Taking 20% Time to the Next Level_
by Don Wettrick
Dave Burgess Consulting, 2014
ISBN 978-0-9882176-2-1
Don Wettrick takes Genius Hour to the next level in his exploration of innovation, in and beyond the classroom.

If you are interested in Genius Hour, 20% Time or Daniel Pink's work on motivation, you'll appreciate and learn from Don Wettrick's _Pure Genius_. There is growing consensus that taking courses and meeting grade expectations to enter higher level education is not providing our students with the 21st-century skills that will lead to the jobs and satisfaction. Applying inquiry techniques can help our students to engage with the world, find what they are passionate about and grow along the way. This book is designed to help you successfully apply these techniques in your class or school.

Although you may feel you've been transported to a motivational retreat when reading _Pure Genius_, it does have very practical aspects. He took the concept of Genius Hour one step further when he convinced his administration that he could make it into a course. He fit it under the umbrella of communications, and his Innovation Class was born. Wettrick knows teachers work within the framework of a curriculum and has figured out ways to embed innovation within it. His structures make Genius Hour, Innovation Club or whatever you wish to name it applicable to a curriculum-based classroom setting.

Chapter Three, ironically titled, _There Is No Plan_, clearly outlines seven aspects necessary for students to create and be successful with an Innovation Project. According to his guidelines students must collaborate with an outside expert, work individually or up to groups of three, complete weekly in-class reflections, provide a detailed proposal and present their final work to invested stakeholders. All these aspects can keep your students accountable and invested in the program and, according to Wettrick, all are necessary. Through years of trial and error, Wettrick has worked to develop his Innovation Class. He generously shares stories of what has and has not worked in his classes, illustrating why he sees these aspects as key to the ultimate goal of student success.

One of the most practical aspects of his process is the student proposal. There are three important skills here. First, students are looking at the curriculum and have to embed a minimum of three objectives or standards within their projects. Teachers across Ontario are being asked to break down the curriculum with their students. Having students assess the curriculum themselves, figuring out what applies to their work, is a natural next step. Second, a timeline with planned actions keeps students on track and builds time management skills. Applying a point system to rank the size and worth of your project is the third skill. Wettrick
expects his students to achieve 100 points over the year. The larger the project, the more points it gets. He recommends that first projects have a smaller timeline so students can work through the process with a manageable goal, gain an understanding of how it works and even fail without losing their year. He recommends grading various aspects so that students can be successful in class, even if their idea doesn’t work out. He understands that a failure of this nature doesn’t mean that a student didn’t learn or make useful connections. Maybe what they learned was how governmental red tape makes change difficult. Maybe they learned that the practical aspects of their idea weren’t so practical after all. On that note, Wettrick includes the voices and stories of students and their successes or failures with their widely varied innovations.

Pure Genius is a documentation of Don Wettrick’s Passion Project journey, and he has traveled far. He shares the joy of community involvement, making connections, following your passions and finding opportunities to make our world a better place. His work means so much to him that he made it a reality for his students and is now sharing it with us. You can clearly see this book is one of the ways Wettrick hopes to spread the satisfaction and knowledge he has personally gained.

**Coding In Scratch: Games Workbook**
by Jon Woodcock & Steve Setford
ISBN 1-4654-4482-0

*Perfect for any elementary educator wishing for a guided plan to get their students to design games and experiment with block coding.*

Perhaps, you’ve run an exciting Hour of Code program, and your students are yearning for more. Where do you take them now? Having your students create and adapt games in Scratch 2.0 could be your next logical step.

Scratch was created out of the MIT Media Lab in 2003 to give students from the ages of 8 to 13 a chance to play with and learn computer programming. According to its website, Scratch “helps young people learn to think creatively, reason systematically, and work collaboratively — essential skills for life in the 21st century.”

This thin workbook outlines, with step-by-step instructions, the creation of four increasingly difficult games. Creating these games builds the experience and knowledge needed for students to work creatively and independently in Scratch.

At only six dollars a book, owning a small set to use in Makerspaces, Coding Clubs or classroom centres, can easily give your students the skills to continue their programming journey.
Dear Rita,

I am in a well-established community and have taken up the role of teacher-librarian in an older school library where I need to deal with the age and condition of the collection. I learned about weeding in my AQ course but I am concerned about the effect of removing titles.

Weedless Wanda

Dear Wanda,

It always breaks my heart to weed, especially those well-loved (damaged beyond repair) titles that I know the students adore. With a limited budget for replacements, weeding may not make sense to some TL’s. Honestly, it is the last job on my to-do list, but weeding is necessary. It is necessary to clear the shelves of old content and make space for new. It is important to cull the titles that are outdated (3 – 5 years) especially in the areas of science, technology or popular culture and let them go. Not to mention the titles that are yellowed with age and might even harbour the remnants of someone’s lunch.

I have occasionally decided that weeding has to be done for each of the above reasons and I attack the shelves with a strong will, a long sleeved shirt and access to lots of soap and water.

1. To begin, I print out a collection list of titles with a last circulation date of 3 or 4 years ago depending on my mood. Another option is to weed based on the currency of the content. Each subject classification can have its “best after” date but again use your professional judgement and knowledge of the collection to make that decision. I once had a volunteer pull books for weeding and when I saw the empty shelves and the full cart I reassessed using currency as a determiner.

2. I work section by section to weed the titles on my list but I may save some titles if curriculum has changed and I expect the books to be useful. I will remove second copies.

3. I will try to touch each book, checking for damage: look, feel and smell.

4. Once I have a good number of books, I will decide if some might be useful in classroom libraries. Those I will delete from the catalogue, stamp Discard, and cover the barcode (permanent marker or address label stamped discard). Then I offer these books to teachers.

5. Record damaged titles to add to your next shopping list.

6. The books which are in very poor condition, outdated or not needed for classroom libraries will be deleted from the catalogue and removed from the school with the help of the custodian. Try to be aware that some may think library books cannot be thrown out but these books are old, damaged and outdated and should not be kept or donated.

Weeding is difficult and may empty more shelves than you expect but when budget time arrives, a list of weeded and lost titles might just improve your chances. You may choose to weed
The curriculum is overwhelming me. We have many new staff this year and I am trying my best to support them and collaborate to develop lessons for their classrooms or for us to address in the library. I am running out of energy and ideas.

Running on Empty,
Dear RoE,
You are not alone. Some days I feel like I have a mind that no longer functions, but I have learned to love the internet and the access to our subject associations that it provides. There are so many resources and lesson plans that are easily accessed and adapted for use at whatever level you are teaching. I have listed some of the online resource sites that I like:

- **Ontario Teachers’ Federation:** [www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/teacher-resources/useful-links/](http://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/teacher-resources/useful-links/)
- **OSSTF list of subject associations:** [www.osstf.on.ca/subjectassociations](http://www.osstf.on.ca/subjectassociations)
- **Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO):** [www.etfo.ca/resources/forteachers/pages/default.aspx](http://www.etfo.ca/resources/forteachers/pages/default.aspx)
- **Ontario Elementary Social Studies Association (OESSTA):** [oessta-teachers.ca/lessons](http://oessta-teachers.ca/lessons)
- **Ontario Physical and Health Educators Association (OPHEA):** [teachingtools.ophea.net/lesson-plans/hpe](http://teachingtools.ophea.net/lesson-plans/hpe)
- **Science Teachers’ Association of Ontario (STAO):** [stao.ca/res2/resources.php](http://stao.ca/res2/resources.php)

If you are interested in digital resources and digital literacy education:

- **Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC):** [osapac.ca/ccpalo/dlr](http://osapac.ca/ccpalo/dlr)
- **Lessons and links from Media Smarts:** [mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources](http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources)

With a few of these resources you can regain some energy and develop great plans with your colleagues.
Going Google!

One of the most exciting aspects of using instructional technology in the classroom is the variety of methods to facilitate the collaborative learning process; it is also the one which many educators, like myself, grapple with the most. Hearing about the successes of educators using Web 2.0 tools to enhance the educational experience of their students is inspiring, and has always motivated me to incorporate them into my classroom. But what to use? Google Apps for Education (GAFE) have been huge game changers for some educators, completely redefining how they interact with their students; but I am often unwilling to introduce new technology in the class simply for the sake of using tech. In order to see if I could use GAFE in my classroom effectively and purposefully, I took a summer course offered by my union federation. Considering my school board has also recently set up Google Education accounts for all teachers and students with unlimited storage space, it seemed to be a good time to take the Google plunge.

A web application with a great deal of promise is the Google Classroom app. I am a long time Edmodo user, however, and thought it was unlikely that I would be convinced to abandon it. I saw the inherent usefulness of Google Drive (see you later, USB sticks!), but I was not prepared to use Google Classroom as my default classroom management app. Through the summer course, I learned that Google Classroom is a much better solution than Edmodo for organizing my classroom. For one, it’s safer to use a server set up by my school board rather than sending student information to an external Edmodo server. Google Classroom also integrates seamlessly with Google Drive, making it much easier to store and attach files, and Google Contacts, which streamlines the class creation process, while still doing everything that Edmodo can do. Making the switch to Google Classroom gives me a platform to modify and improve peer editing in my classroom, and provides the opportunity to completely redefine the activity.

Whenever I consider introducing new technology into the classroom I always consider the SAMR model for tech integration. If I cannot design a method using new technology that completely changes and improves a pre-existing, non-tech based activity, then I see little point of taking the time to learn and implement the technology. When I decided three years ago to move towards a “flipped classroom” model, for example, initially all I was doing was playing pre-recorded lessons on the LCD instead of delivering them live. Eventually, however, I was creating and using my own educational videos in the classroom, which lead to generating a bank of videos that I can share with students online to reinforce concepts learned at school, as well as keep absent students current on material covered. My favourite success story moment using the flipped video model was the day I was showing a video to the class, and realized that a student who was absent that day was accessing the video from home at the same time!

When I first began using Google Classroom, the main task I found it replaced was writing daily learning goals, assignment dates, and homework on the chalkboard, and having students write these details down in their agendas. Right from the outset, it was clear that using Google Classroom was going to make classroom communication more streamlined.
Classroom also works seamlessly with other Google applications, like Google Contacts, which means you don’t have to rely solely on classroom codes to get your class set up. You can send mass invites in Google Classroom, which is perfect for a high rotary teacher like myself. Not content to simply bask in the glow of quick and efficient classroom communication, I also wanted to make full use of the Classroom platform as a collaborative learning environment.

This is my first year as a classroom Language teacher, and I was looking for a way to encourage peer editing in my classroom, as well as create a framework for a collaborative writing space. I decided that I was going to use Google Classroom, not just to assign homework, but to create a space where students are encouraged to share their thoughts about books that they are reading, to see examples of effective reading criticism, and to offer and receive feedback on the process of writing about what they are reading. I decided to set up a new Google Classroom for my class each month, designated as a monthly Book Club. Since it is so easy to use a Contact Group to quickly set up a new class, it made sense to keep my class’s daily communication separate from the Book club page. We want to keep things from getting too cluttered.

I always ensure that everyone in my grade 8 class has at least one student choice book in their possession. Regular trips to the library, with our very helpful Teacher Librarian, ensure students always have high-interest reading material. The instructions for the first Book Club assignment were simple and achievable: Write a review of your chosen book giving at least three reasons why the book you have chosen is worth reading, and why other people would enjoy it. The assignment was given out at the beginning of the month, and students were given access to the Google Classroom and instructed to post their review any time before the due date at the end of the month.

When students first log on to the Book Club Classroom, they find the assignment announcement, which re-iterates the instructions given in class. The first post is a sample review, written by myself about the book I was reading at the time. As a classroom activity, students are encouraged to log on, read the sample book review, and to identify three things that make it an example of a good book review. Their ticket out the door is to share their reasoning with the class. Since all that is required to access Google Classroom is any device that is Wi-Fi enabled, students used their own personal iPods, or school provided iPads to complete the exit ticket. The purpose of this introductory activity is twofold: It encourages students to investigate and label elements of good critical writing by an experienced writer, and students are given the opportunity to co-create criteria by which their own writing is evaluated. Once students have submitted their book reviews to the Book Club Classroom, we then have students pair up with a peer, and read each other’s book review. Students identify three strengths about their peer’s review, and bring up at least one area for improvement.

Google Classroom already has an efficient workspace for students to perform this sort of peer assessment. Each student, by default, has the ability to create new posts that can be viewed by the whole class, and each student also has the ability to leave public comments on those posts. To make the process even more interactive, I elected to use Padlet in conjunction with Google Classroom in the peer editing process. I created a blank Padlet page asking for feedback on my sample book review, and then posted the link to the page in the comments section of my sample review. Students share their ideas with the class by leaving a comment on the Padlet page. There is not a significant benefit of collecting feedback in this way, but it does allow you to display the

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comments in a “tiled” format which may be more visually appealing and easier to browse than a stream of sequential comments under a Classroom post. Padlet pages have the added benefit of being easily sharable with outside users by simply providing the page URL, and Padlet also allows you to export and print the page as a PDF, should you need a hard copy of the comments left by students.

I was very pleased with the results of this peer editing activity, which was made possible by Google Classroom. There was noticeable improvement in several of my students’ critical writing, particularly in their ability to show support for their statements, and to choose more vivid verbs and adjectives.

To further improve on this activity, my next step is to use the Google Classroom platform to augment and redefine peer editing. Since Google Classroom is web based, and considering that all students in my school board are already setup with Google accounts, it would be relatively easy to extend the Book Club activity to include other Grade 8 students in my school, at other middle schools, and even include students in elementary or secondary schools. The downside is that Google Educational accounts are locked to only communicate with other accounts in the same school board, preventing a truly global classroom peer editing activity. That being said, I would love to hear from other educators that use GAFE to redefine their classroom activities, and would love to hear from teachers in the Peel District School Board who want to collaborate with my Grade 8s to improve their students’ writing.

WITH $20, YOU CAN CHANGE A READER’S LIFE

Thousands of people attend the Festival of Trees every year, but there are many who can’t. The reality is that many schools and communities, such as First Nation, rural, and at-risk communities, cannot afford the cost of transportation to bring readers to the Festival of Trees, an event that some have described as “invaluable... for creating new generations of readers.”

DONATE TODAY: www.accessola.com/festivalfund
Using graphic novels and comics in the library can benefit learners and enhance student engagement, no matter their learning style. The combination of reading text, dialogue, and images encourages inferential thinking and introduces students to an alternative way to read.

I wondered about using comic style graphic novels in the library, specifically superhero comics owing to their popularity. I talked to Andrew at The Beguiling in Toronto (E-mail: mail@beguiling.com) and asked him to suggest titles. I specifically requested as many diverse superheroes as were appropriate for my middle school audience. I was surprised by the options I had.

I purchased two copies of each of 25 diverse Superhero graphic novels which include some ‘old faithfils’ (Batman, Superman and Spiderman), processed the books and started advertising our Superhero battle. My plan was to offer students the opportunity to read at lunch or after school as an exclusive club and then vote for their favourite. Using Google Forms, I created an online vote where students entered their name and class, selected the titles from a drop down menu, and ranked the book: 1(okay) to 3(heroes).

Individual students were asked to sign up for the superhero book club to have first access to the new titles. Students would be able to borrow the titles and have an opportunity to discuss them with other fans of the format. Unfortunately this aspect of the battle was less popular than it was with the classes participating as a group. A bonus included a few teachers who included the Superhero battle in their language program. The classes discussed the portrayal of violence in the comics, examples of gender stereotyping, or searched for evidence of diversity. Some extended the superhero reading to have students create their own superhero and super villain, identifying characteristics of each. I suggested curriculum related questions which might be used in discussion circles.

1.5 Explain using stated and implied ideas from the text.
Locate a gutter where the author has left something to the reader’s imagination. Explain what is
1.6 Connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them. “What did you find is similar and different from other superhero formats: traditional novels, games, movies or television?”

4.1 Identify a range of strategies they found helpful and explain, identify how they can use these and other strategies to improve as readers. How did you read this graphic novel...dialogue only? ...images first then dialogue? ...dialogue first then images? ...both at the same time?

The superheroes on my list were varied and diverse. It was exciting to see which superheroes attracted readers and which titles they enjoyed. The following is a list of the superhero comics and the diverse attributes in each: gender, age, sexual orientation, and heritage: religion, country of origin or race.

- Avengers (I would have loved to offer the New Avengers: black Captain America and female Thor)
- Arana (teen, female, Hispanic)
- Ant-man
- Batman
- Battling Boy (boy)
- Batwoman (female, lesbian)
- Black Lightning (African American)
- Captain Marvel (female)
- Icon (African American)
- Iron man
- Jubilee (Asian, teen, female)
- Miles Morales: Ultimate Spider-man (teen, Hispanic)
- Ms Marvel: (female, teen, Muslim)
- Runaways: (teens, male and female, alien, African American, Asian, Jewish, lesbian)
- Shadow Hero (Asian, teen)
- Smallville (Superman)
- Spider-Man
- Static Shock (African American, teen)
- Storm (female, African)
- Superhero Girl (teen, female)
- X-Men
- Captain Canuck

If you are interested, information about more comic superheroes can be found at www.comicvine.com. In my opinion, the best resource for learning how comics work and how to read them is Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art? by Scott McCloud (ISBN13: 9780060976255).

I will be organizing a Superhero battle again.
Authors’ Booking Service (ABS) Celebrates 10 Years of Connecting

A conversation between TingL and Marsha Skrypuch

Authors’ Booking Service (ABS) is a free service for schools and libraries, offering assistance in booking authors and illustrators for presentations. It first opened its virtual doors in April of 2006, the brainchild of authors Valerie Sherrard and Marsha Skrypuch. The pair redesigned their site and school library professionals can go to www.authorsbooking.com for news, tours, and more. Co-founder Marsha and The Teaching Librarian exchanged a few emails to chat about ABS, its anniversary, and insider information.

What did you do before creating ABS?
We are authors ourselves and we each did a lot of school and library presentations before forming ABS. After struggling with scheduling and other difficulties, we began to organize resource lists, and immediately realized that these lists would also be useful for other writers. Coordinating school bookings can be a challenge for educators and book creators alike and we recognized how valuable this service could be to both groups.

How has ABS changed in the last ten years?
When we began in April 2006, our roster consisted of about ten presenters and our Ontario-based contact list was small. We posted availability on a free blog. Word spread quickly and we made our first booking within days. By September of 2006, we had signed on about 20 more authors, we had our own domain name and a website and our subscriber list was blooming.

We now represent 100+ of Canada’s best loved children’s book presenters and performers and while our contact list still focuses on Ontario, we have had requests from across Canada, the US and around the world.

This past summer we did a complete overhaul of the website to make it more dynamic and user friendly. Each presenter’s page is image-rich and information is given in short blocks and tags rather than lots of text. Every presenter page has a contact form, which gives teacher-librarians direct email access to the author, and ABS receives a copy.

Tell us about what you do with the Forest of Reading.
Within the first year of ABS being created, we noticed a need. Out of province authors who were shortlisted for one of the Forest of Reading awards would contact us, asking for help. They were over the moon about the nomination, but terrified too. It’s a daunting task, trying to cobble together a tour if you’re from out of province, have few, if any, contacts, and don’t know the area. As an example, one Alberta author thought she could do a presentation in Woodstock in the morning and Markham in the afternoon.

Schools and libraries also contacted us about booking nominees because when they had tried to book directly the travel expenses put the visit beyond their budget.

We were able to solve both issues by clustering readings in a way that was logistically possible for our presenters, and also in a way that neighbouring schools and libraries could split the travel costs. And when possible, we helped arrange subsidies and grants to help.

When Meredith Tutching became the Director of the Forest of Reading, ABS became OLA and the Forest of Reading’s official booking agent.

Our work goes beyond mere bookings. We’ve mentored many a first time author on how to present, how to invoice and how to organize a tour. We’ve also found last minute replacements when a presenter has fallen ill and intervened when an author hasn’t been paid.

What have been your biggest challenges?
Running Authors’ Booking Service is a lot of work, especially at certain times of the year. In addition to running ABS, we are both authors ourselves with book deadlines and presentation

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The biggest challenge happens when we’re on tour at the same time. If you’ve ever received an email message from us at 2am, it was one of those times.

Can you describe the qualities of a dream presenter?
A dream presenter is more than just someone who can entertain a roomful of students. For us, it’s important that their creative work enriches and inspires. While it may appear from our roster that we only represent high profile authors, many of our members were relatively unknown when we first signed them on.

A dream author radiates enthusiasm and acceptance. They love presenting to kids and it shows. They are flexible, dependable and have a sense of humour. With a dream author, it’s all about the students.

And now describe an author from “heck”.
We don’t have any of those, but here are a few things to watch out for: authors who push book sales during presentations, who are undependable, who don’t know how to engage kids, who don’t know when to stop talking and authors who spend an excessive amount of time reading.

Can you describe the dream presentation venue?
Many authors prefer to present in a school library rather than a gym. Good acoustics and a sound system when needed are key. Also, everyone in the audience should be able to see and hear the author. The author should be able to see and hear each student as well.

What’s your biggest pet peeve?
We find it frustrating when an educator or librarian asks for our help or uses our resources but then goes directly to the author when doing the booking. Our service is free to schools and libraries, and our presenters pay us a modest fee based on how many bookings we get them. If we’re bypassed in the booking process, our authors have no idea that our services were helpful and we are not paid for the work that we did.

Why is it better for a school or library to use your services rather than just going directly to an author?
There are many good reasons for using ABS — from ease of contact and quickly accessible information to assistance with possible issues and pitfalls. This service saves time and frustration, and supports a large community of children’s book creators. And did we mention that it’s free to schools and libraries?

What advice do you have for a teacher-librarian’s first booking experience?
We have a checklist on our website with oodles of advice to make your visit successful, but we are always available and happy to answer any questions or help in any way we can.

What is the best way to contact ABS?
Our email address is abs@authorsbooking.com and we’re happy to offer suggestions and answer questions. As well, every author page on our site has an email contact form, so if you have already decided which author you’d like to book, simply use that form to get in touch with them. We’re automatically copied in.
There’s something magical about being in a room with more books than you could conceivably read. Growing up, my favourite scene in Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* was when the Beast shows Belle his library — shelves upon shelves upon shelves, all the way up to an impossibly high ceiling, with ladders to access the most unreachable corners and heights, and every inch of shelf space filled with books. Back then it seemed as though such a library could only exist in fiction, yet when I visited the North York Central Library and York University’s Scott Library, looking up at the floors and floors of books, I knew I was just about as close as I could get.

Raised as a reader, I never knew a life without visits to the library and books I could call my own. Stories meant knowledge, books deserved the utmost respect, and any questions I might have could be answered by one, as long as I found the right one. Being in a library brings the most peaceful feeling, as I have an innate awareness I am in a safe environment where the exchange of ideas is unimpeded. It is almost spiritual.

Books have also provided me with a different plane of existence to explore. Reading was a way to experience things I was unable to do as someone who grew up as a liver transplant recipient with muscular dystrophy, as well as the things I was afraid to do because of my introverted nature. I could be in my body, but free from it at the same time. I could fight the battle for Narnia with Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. I could visit Gairloch and hang out with Norah and Gavin’s full and lovable adopted family. I could even go back in time through the root cellar with Rose to look for Will.

As in author Lena Coakley’s book, *Worlds of Ink and Shadow*, characters are real to me, yet at the same time I know they are not real. When I once read a story that claimed characters in a book were self-aware and stuck in the moment the reader closed the book like they were in purgatory, I was upset for weeks. I’m certain this remains the reason why I rarely, if ever, leave a book unfinished, even if I hate it. Getting lost in a book is easy for me, having my reading interrupted and being jolted back to reality is not. And, like Harriet in *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh, I simply love learning new things.

Once I hit my early teens though, my reading changed. It was no longer just about an insatiable sense of curiosity, the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge sake, and escape. Instead, as I became aware of the implications of the ongoing medical interventions I required that no one else in my life did, I began to search literature for characters like me.

I was only mildly successful. While books about Terry Fox became my inspiration, I also wept over a well worn copy of *Alex: The Life of a Child*, the true story about a little girl named Alex Deford who died from Cystic Fibrosis in 1980. In the world of fiction, while Owen Meany did not die from his physical afflictions, he still met with a premature, tragic death. *A Summer to Die* by Lois Lowry tells you what happens to Molly, a young girl with cancer. Even Bailey from *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* by Ann Brashares, a particularly insightful and powerful character, dies from her cancer in the end.

The discovery of author Lurlene McDaniel’s books prompted a love/hate reaction. While her characters were the closest I could find when it came to sharing my life experiences with organ failure and transplantation, they were plagued with incredibly sappy romance storylines and often died as well. It was actually through her books that I first came to realise what organ rejection really meant.

While I began to believe I was doomed because people like me (genetically flawed, chronically ill and disabled) simply didn’t survive, in fiction or in real life, I kept reading - searching for...
something more. Once I reached high school, I would go to the public library and just take a stack of books off the shelf. I started at the A’s and took a bunch of books I hadn’t read yet, or I picked the thickest books I could find. I made my way through a few classics, but usually I stuck to my favourite genre: teen fiction. And then, one day, I came across a Chris Crutcher book.

I picked up his *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* on a whim, and I was hooked by the depiction of Sarah, a character with scars. After that one book, I relentlessly hunted down other Crutcher books and obsessively watched for new ones to come out. And when I read *Stotan!*, something inside me just clicked.

At the time, though I wasn’t using a walker or a wheelchair yet and it was before my Marathon of Books, I was by no means any kind of athlete. In fact, because of restrictive cardiomyopathy in my old heart, I didn’t even have to take physical education at school. Which is why it might be puzzling that I would gravitate so completely toward sport-themed books filled with able-bodied characters driven to achieving athletic excellence.

Except somehow in reading Crutcher’s stories I found many kindred spirits. His characters knew what it was like to continually strive to push their physical and emotional limits, and, though our limits were different, I knew I was the same as them. Crutcher’s characters were all Stotans, a term coined by Australian coach Percy Cerutty to describe a philosophy that combines attributes of Stoic and Spartan ideologies, and I was a Stotan too.

Even though the Crutcher books stand out in my mind as playing a pivotal role in my teen years, I have found reading any book to be an intensely personal experience. Through each book I learn things about myself - from my likes and dislikes to increasing my emotional intelligence and empathy as I see my own emotions mirrored in a character’s journey. I found I identified with LGBTQ books as a teen because while I was a cisgender, heterosexual female, I was also a person dealing with an invisible chronic illness at the time, and I could empathize with having secrets and struggling to fit in. As I spent the middle part of my twenties in heart failure, I was drawn to the fantastic world of dystopian books, as they put words to the desperateness of life in the face of staggering situations, something I had an intimate knowledge of as I waited to live or die. When I read *Catching Fire*, the second book in the Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins a couple of years after my heart transplant, I wept over the unfairness of Katniss and Peeta having to participate in the Quarter Quell Hunger Games to fight for their lives all over again. But I quickly realised my tears were also for myself as their story was helping me grieve my own situation as a double transplant recipient. I could also understand the pain of surviving someone else even when you weren’t responsible for their death, as Katniss feels with Rue.

That is the true beauty of literature. When I don’t have the words to express how I feel, when everything inside is locked down so tight so I can focus on surviving another procedure and another day, books provide the language I need to express myself. Books have helped me recognize my emotions and grieve, they have inspired me to keep dreaming, they have continued to foster my thankfulness to be alive - they have even influenced what I am looking for in a partner. Sometimes the books I read are agitators, getting under my skin and challenging me to think about things I didn’t want to think about, or introducing me to new information that takes time for me to digest. But even when that happens and I find myself upset over painful ideas, I keep reading and develop my critical thinking skills. Reading is never a waste.

This life-long pursuit of connection, understanding, and healing through books had a name the whole time I was unknowingly practicing it on myself. It’s called Bibliotherapy. And without the many, many libraries I’ve used over my lifetime (church, school, hospital, special and public), I wouldn’t have had access to the wealth of worldwide knowledge that has helped me in my journey. The freedom to read whatever I wanted to has been a gift, leading me to places I never could have imagined in fiction and in real life.
Seneca College is a large institution with multiple campuses across the GTA, and four campus libraries. We have more than 26,500 full-time students and over 150 full-time programs, including:

- 12 Degrees
- 64 Diplomas
- 23 Advanced Diplomas
- 22 Certificates
- 29 Post-graduate Certificates

While we are a large institution we try to remember that each one of our students often has personal challenges. So to make college an easier transition for new students we would like to share some things students should know before beginning college. We have also shared some of our more popular resources that anyone is welcome to use with their students.

**Preparation**

Jennifer Peters and Adele Georgievski

We have worked at Seneca Libraries for many years and have seen lots of students struggle with their first year assignments. This article is meant to help Teacher-Librarians better understand the types of skills that would benefit students who are entering college for the first time.

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**A Little Context**

Contrary to some students’ ideas, research is not just for university. They will have to do a considerable amount of research in college, regardless of the discipline. Often students feel comfortable doing basic Google searches, but some advanced searching techniques for academic topics would go a long way. For example, our students often need to use Google to find government websites (or other "grey literature") and being able to use "site searching" (adding "site" and then the file extension to retrieve websites with only that ending to the URL) comes in really handy.

We also spend a lot of time explaining the differences between formats and content types such as newspapers, magazines, journals, and books. If students entered college knowing the difference between those (and more importantly, the differences in the types of information they’ll find in each), they would be well on their way to finding the sources they need for their research topics.

Speaking of research topics… choosing one is hard! The art of picking one that is specific enough and yet still “answerable” is even harder. Students need lots of practice (with lots of trial and error) to become effective at this very important skill. Once they’ve chosen their topics, being able to quickly pick out their main ideas from their topic and think of alternate keywords (or synonyms) will go a long way when searching our library databases. Heck, understanding that choosing keywords is all a part of the research process is a big step in the right direction.

The biggest division between students who “get it” and those who come to our library frustrated and confused is the

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difference in expectations of the research process. Practicing doing various types of searching for various formats and content types will teach students that research is an iterative process. Likewise, students need to remember that developing and exploring a topic is not supposed to be quick and easy. Going into their research with this mentality helps to manage expectations.

College Has Research and LOTS of Essays

Who knew there were so many types of essays? Not our students! Academic writing is challenging, and students are often bewildered to realize that they will be responsible for writing reflective papers, research studies, literature reviews, article summaries, and more. Not only are there different types of essays but there is also a different tone that students will need to use for each type! No more “Well, I just think that...” or “Webster’s Dictionary defines...” They will be asked to critically evaluate primary and secondary sources, as well as use MLA or APA style format to create various types of papers. Instructors at the college level expect writing to be academic and polished.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHER-LIBRARIANS:

- EAC150 General English Tutorial: infoliteracy.senecac.on.ca/eac150
- Subject guides: seneca.libguides.com/subjectguides (contains subject specific resources for students starting their research)

RESOURCES FOR TEACHER-LIBRARIANS:

- Purdue OWL Academic Writing guide: owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/2
- Assignment Calculator: sparc4.senecac.on.ca/assignmentcalculator

Just like in high school, assignments are expected to be handed in on time. Time management is crucial when writing essays. Using a tool like an assignment calculator (below) can be just the thing to get students to plan out their assignment and ensure that they make use of college resources such as the Library and Learning/Tutoring Centre.

College Has Strict Academic Honesty Policies

Students will be expected to adhere to various policies at college; among them are the Academic Honesty Policy and Fair Dealing Policy (Seneca College; http://www.senecacollege.ca/academic-policy/acpol-09.html http://www.senecacollege.ca/policies/fair-dealing.html) And while students won’t be expected to be experts on their first day, they should already have a fundamental understanding of the reason for these two policies.

In general, students entering a first semester course at Seneca should know:

- Failure to cite properly in an assignment results in a zero grade on their assignment for the first offence and a failing grade in the course for the second offence. Further offences could mean suspension or withdrawal from the college.
- Citing is important because it acknowledges someone else’s hard work or brilliant ideas, work and ideas that are not your own! So it’s important to take the time to track your sources and compile a work cited list.
- There is a difference between quoting and paraphrasing, and both require in-text citation.
- Canadian Copyright Law is very confusing and vague, but we still have a responsibility to follow it. The college has very clear guidelines for its students, if these guidelines are contravened the student would be fully responsible for any legal action taken.
- There are TONS of resources for students to use online with reduced copyright restrictions, so take advantage of them! e.g. Creative Commons search in Flickr, The Noun Project, YouTube Audio Library.
Students Will Go Way Beyond Snapchat and Yik Yak

Almost all assignments at Seneca involve using a computer and the internet. Not only do students have to understand the basics of word processing and presentation software, but more and more college professors are using digital media in their assignments. Students in programs like Business, Early Childhood Education, and Computer Studies are being asked to create media (animated and live action videos), digital stories and infographics.

Not too long ago we were all led to believe that students entering college nowadays were “digital natives”. We now know this to be untrue. Sure, students may know how to use Instagram and operate their smart phones, but ask them to create a video or an infographic and they’re stumped. Then ask if they know their copyright responsibilities and some will think they can’t use anything, or some will think they can use everything, and they would both be incorrect!

In general, for students entering a first semester college course, these are some areas where they should demonstrate proficiency:

- **Basic computer settings**: attaching a microphone and changing the settings, zipping a file, navigating a computer’s file storage and practicing good file management, creating a back-up.
- **Uploading and sharing files online**: Dropbox, Google Docs, OneDrive. This includes knowing different file types, understanding privacy settings.
- **Online collaborative tools (e.g. Google Drive)**: this includes how they work, how to not lose a file or delete your partner’s information.
- **Basic skills for video production**: familiarity with free and readily accessible tools like Windows Movie Maker and iMovie.
- **Basic web design**: familiarity with the basics of coding, and experience with free website tools like Wordpress or Blogger.
- **Fundamentals of digital citizenship**: Protecting their own privacy, managing their digital footprint, acting respectfully online, knowing their basic copyright user’s rights and responsibilities.
- **Technology zen**: being okay with the fact that something will go wrong and that there may or may not be a way to fix it.

But College Doesn’t Have To Be Scary...

Although many of these skills will be covered by college professors, it’s often done in a cursory manner because it is assumed students learned these skills in high school. And even if students did in fact learn these skills before coming to college, it’s often the practice and reinforcement of them that is needed so that once they get to college they are not caught off guard by the work expected of them.

College libraries and high school libraries are partners in students’ success. Please feel free to use any of these resources as you see fit to help with the development of your students’ academic research and writing skills.

We hope you can talk openly with your students about college expectations, and let them know — we can’t wait to meet them!

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**RESOURCES FOR TEACHER-LIBRARIANS:**

- Academic Honesty Tutorial: infoliteracy. senecac.on.ca/ah
- MLA and APA Citation Guides: library. senecacollege.ca/Research_Help/Citing_Sources/index.html
- Copyright for Seneca Students: studentcopyright.wordpress.com

- **Seneca Sandbox** (including modules on videos, digital storytelling, infographics, and more!): senecacollege.ca/sandbox
- **Introduction to Digital Citizenship**: senecasandbox.wordpress.com/intro-dig-cit
VISIT OUR EXCLUSIVE LIBRARIES WEBSITE.
Quickly and easily obtain an estimate online with no obligation on your part.

www.campusdiscount.com/library