

Report on the Village School Library/ Media Program

by Allison Murdoch, Village School Librarian

The stated mission of the Marblehead School Library Media Program is to:

1. Promote a love and appreciation for reading and good literature
2. Create capable and critical users of information and technology.

Promoting a love and appreciation for reading and good literature:

While both of the above goals are equally important at the Village School, it should be noted that the focus in **library class** for grades 4–6 shifts from an early elementary emphasis on learning about authors and genres of literature through wonderful books shared by the librarian to an emphasis on learning how to find, use and evaluate information, especially for research.

Promoting a love of reading and literature remains an important mission of the Library, but we strive to achieve this goal through other school-wide initiatives and library programs rather than specifically during the time allotted for library class. Students are encouraged to use the library on an as needed basis, at any time during the day or after school, not exclusively during library class as they do in the lower elementary grades.

One of our primary objectives in promoting a love of reading and good literature has been to continue developing our library collection so that it meets the needs and interests of our current student body. Purchasing materials appropriate for our fourth grades remains a priority, as there were no books at this level in the collection remaining when the school was reconfigured. We have been fortunate to receive funding from the PTO, from a Friends of Marblehead Schools Grant and from family donations to purchase materials of interest to students at all levels. We issue a bimonthly newsletter notifying the school community of new additions to our collection and encouraging everyone to come check them out. In order to keep our student body interested in reading, it is essential that we continue to update our collection.

The library hosts an EDU block at each grade level, the purpose of which is to promote reading for pleasure. This is similar to the Just Read block at the Veterans School. Next year, I would like to offer the option of participating in book groups during this block. I would also like to create a forum for student book reviews, possibly on the library website.

At the start of this year, the Library hosted a book trivia contest to encourage students to visit the library daily. This generated a lot of excitement and I would like to run several such contests each year.

Creating capable and critical users of information.

In order to achieve this goal, I have worked with the grade level teachers to develop a program that will complement, rather than compete with, the curriculum being taught in the classrooms. Basically, I am teaching information use and research skills within the context of what students are studying at the various grade levels. For example, our study of the “National Geographic United States Atlas for Young Explorers” nicely complements the fourth grade’s study of the U.S. regions. Likewise, I have chosen the study of Canada as a vehicle to teach

information/research skills to the 4th grades since it is an area of the curriculum that the teachers have little time to cover.

For the sixth grades, I have developed a 12-step research model and a project on global etiquette, which will complement the research students are currently doing on their global marketplace countries. This project will walk students through the 12 steps of a research project as well as reinforce important information gathering skills. Students will present their projects as Power Point presentations created in technology class.

The fifth grade program is still in development as the grade level teachers work to tighten up their curriculum this year. I have offered to teach the 12-step research model to 5th graders in conjunction with their year-end exit project, the details of which are still being decided. In the meantime, I strive to teach information and research skills through the use of engaging activities that will familiarize students with our library resources and how to use them.

Attached is a list of information/research skills and specific examples of the activities used to teach them at the different grade levels. Grade level explorations of literature are also included.

Technology:

Fifth and sixth grade students alternate weekly between library and technology class, which is taught by Mrs. Kameron. Fourth grade students receive basic technology training as part of their library program. The emphasis in fourth grade is on keyboarding skills through the use of the Type-to-Learn program. Fourth graders also learn basic skills such as how to create a Microsoft Word document, how to import images and how to save a document.

Areas of the program to develop:

In order for the library program to be most effective, I think we need to develop a research model that is used by the entire school. The research process should be consistent within each grade and should follow a predetermined progression each year. For example teachers and librarians should agree on what constitutes an acceptable Works Cited page (bibliography) for 4th, 5th and 6th grades and then the expectation should be the same for all projects assigned at the various grade levels.

Other concerns with the program stem primarily from scheduling constraints. For example, 5th and 6th grades come to library every other week, attending technology class on alternate weeks. Students in 5th and 6th grade have difficulty retaining information and it is difficult to maintain a sense of continuity, from class to class. (This is not an issue with the fourth graders who come weekly). A possibility would be for 5th and 6th grades to come to the library regularly for a block of time to learn information skills or to work on a particular project. The following block of time would be spent on developing skills in technology class.

I have also noticed a declining interest amongst fifth and sixth graders to check out books to read for pleasure. It is unclear if this is a result of peer pressure, heavy workloads or because they are reading from their class libraries. After observing the excitement generated by the Battle of the Books program at the Veterans School, I would like to sponsor a similar program at the Village School.