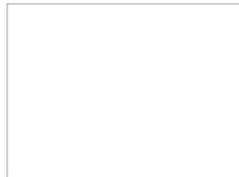


# Kick (L)it into High Gear This Year

As a school librarian, I love to "share the awesome," so I'm sharing with you today some awesome ideas to kick lit into high gear, and get your students excited about reading and connecting.



## IASL Bookmark Exchange Project

Each year during the month of October, the International Association of School Librarianship hosts a bookmark exchange project where participants from all around the world exchange bookmarks for International School Library Month. Last year, 1,200 participants signed up for the exchange. I'm always on the lookout for the sign-up starting in late August and matches are generally made by the end of September.

We first participated in 2011. I signed up every class in the school. With close to 1,000 students, we had a lot of bookmarks to track! We were matched up with 17 different schools, including schools from Maryland and Alabama to Singapore and Spain. Moving forward, I focused this project and related activities on just one grade level. Last year, our fourth graders exchanged with students in India, Croatia, Australia, and China. I utilize this opportunity to highlight our nonfiction collection and books about countries as well as our databases such as Britannica, World Book Encyclopedia, and Culturegrams. With a real-world application for their research, students dive deep into learning about the countries where our matches are located. They also create products to tell about a day in the life of a Pine Road student. The bookmarks we have received might be focused on a theme—or they may all be origami monsters! One school sent bookmarks of their favorite books and my students were delighted to see that a love of literature spans the oceans. To learn more about IASL and the ISLM Bookmark Exchange, visit <https://iasl-online.org/advocacy/islm>.

## The Global Read Aloud

The Global Read Aloud (<https://theglobalreadaloud.com>) was begun in 2010 by seventh-grade English teacher Pernille Ripp, and according to the project website, it has grown to connect more than 4 million students. The project runs for six weeks starting in October, with one title selected for each of these levels: early elementary (second and third grade); upper elementary/middle school (fourth and fifth grade); middle school/junior high; and young adult. At our school, for students in kindergarten and first grade, we utilize the picture book author/illustrator choice, which is a set of titles presented as a study of a book creator.

One of our building goals is to get teachers reading aloud to students more often, so this project is a good fit. A weekly schedule is provided for reading picture books or chapters and there are many opportunities to connect with other readers around the globe. We create bookmarks to outline the timeline for reading aloud for ease of implementation, but also encourage teachers to read the book aloud even if they aren't able to follow the timeline exactly. As we have now implemented the program for three years, teachers are beginning to independently build units of study around the books. In the library, I highlight books to extend our students' understanding of the author/illustrator's work. For example, in 2017, Mem Fox was the selected author and five of her books were read aloud within the classroom. I selected a few more to read in the library and incorporated globe and map skills for our author study. Each year, following the read aloud program, the selected books continue to be popular as independent reads among the students.

## Author Visit

An author visit is a great way to get students engaged in literature and connect the school as a whole. In elementary schools (and in life), visiting authors and illustrators are rock stars. Look for an author or illustrator who is local to your area or partner with surrounding schools to offset travel costs. We have been fortunate to host Lauren Tarshis (@laurenTarshis), author of the *I Survived* series; Matt McElligott (@Matt\_McElligott), digital artist and author of the Benjamin Franklinstein books; Caldecott and Coretta Scott King Honor winner Bryan Collier; and Chris Grabenstein (@CGrabenstein), author of the Mr. Lemoncello series. We have also visited virtually with Newbery Honor winner Jennifer Holm (@jenniholm); Corey Rosen Schwartz (@CoreyPBNinja), author of *Ninja Red Riding Hood*; Iza Trapani (@IzaTrapani); and graphic novelist and illustrator, Matt Phelan (@MattPhelanDraws). Students get excited in anticipation of the visit but the lasting effects are seen afterward when students request books by the visiting authors and illustrators for years to come.

Whether you are able to host an author visit or not, check out author websites for great ideas for activities to highlight the literature that may already be sitting on your shelves. Chris Grabenstein (<http://chrisgrabenstein.com/kids>) has a video trivia game, "Library Olympic Games," including pictograms and the types of puzzles featured in his Mr. Lemoncello books, which highlight modern classics like *Bud, Not Buddy*; *Where the Sidewalk Ends*; and *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. Chris also has a scavenger hunt already built for students to find books on the shelves in your library. Lauren Tarshis (<https://www.laurenarshis.com>), Matt McElligott (<http://www.matthewmcelligott.com>), and Corey Rosen Schwartz (<http://coreyrosenschwartz.com>) also provide a number of lesson plans, activities, and videos to accompany their books.

## March Madness for Books

In Pennsylvania, we have the PA Young Reader's Choice Award, and many states have similar programs. Each spring, the next year's nominees are announced and we offer the list as part of our summer reading program. In order to vote, students must read at least three of the books on the nominee list. For our younger grades, I incorporate at least three (and often many more) of the titles into our lessons. For the older grades, I read aloud from the summary or the first chapter at the end of class to pique interest and these books fly off the shelves. Votes are submitted in early March so, to coincide with college basketball's March Madness, I create a bulletin board bracket to pit titles against each other and announce the outcome of our school's votes. This year's clear winner in my school was Sara Pennypacker's *Pax*, one of last year's Global Read Aloud selections!

## Social Media

Peer recommendations are powerful. When kids start talking about what they are reading, it can create a groundswell. Each year, I always make a point to

finish out the year by turning to the real experts. Who knows what a third grader likes to read better than a third grader? For our last cycle of library classes, students spend time brainstorming the books they would recommend to other kids and we share via Twitter with the hashtag #summerreading. By doing so, we make a fully kid-created list sorted by grade level. When I first started this activity, the responses were predominantly *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Captain Underpants*. (Not that there's anything wrong with that. I love the Captain). And yet, it demonstrated a limited scope for our students, in that they weren't being exposed to a variety and diversity of literature. Each year, their recommendations show increasing development and range.

As with any new initiative, take one idea above that might work for you and your population and try it out this year. Take a moment to reflect on your practice and share an idea with your PLN and me @ontheshelf4kids on Twitter with the hashtags #sharetheawesome and #kicklit. Together, we can get kids and adults reading. One book at a time. Followed by another. And another.

#### **Work Cited**

"My Story." Pernille Ripp. <https://pernillesripp.com/about/my-story/>. Accessed July 1, 2018.

#### **About the Author**

**Ellen Zschunke**, MS, is a K-5 teacher librarian at Pine Road Elementary School, Huntingdon Valley, PA. She earned her bachelor's in elementary education with a minor in early childhood education from Shippensburg University and her master's in reading with a reading specialist certification from Gwynedd Mercy University. She completed post-graduate work in the school library certification program at Arcadia University. She shares about her school library, technology integration, and book suggestions at <http://ontheshelf4kids.blogspot.com/> and on Twitter @ontheshelf4kids.

COPYRIGHT 2019 ABC-CLIO, LLC

#### **MLA Citation**

Zschunke, Ellen. "Kick (L)it into High Gear This Year." *School Library Connection*, November 2018, [schoollibraryconnection.com/Home/Display/2150607](http://schoollibraryconnection.com/Home/Display/2150607).

<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Home/Display/2150607?topicCenterId=1945913>

Entry ID: 2150607