

Digi Know? Equity with eBooks

One of the advantages of writing this column is the ability to share my ideas, thoughts, and suggestions for integrating eBooks into the curriculum and help you think about new ways to engage readers. It is that engagement element that has me giving a lot of thought to our English Language Learners (ELLs) and access to books that they can actually read and enjoy. The idea of our kiddos curling up with a parent or sibling to share a story fills my heart with joy but the idea that we do not provide that same opportunity to our ELLs fills me with sadness. Our libraries are filled with books our English-speaking students can check out and take home to read with loved ones. It should worry each and every one of us that some of our families, especially those of our ELL students, cannot read a bedtime story together or enjoy the togetherness of snuggling up with treasured picture book.

When we discover an inequity for our students, my team and I work on the premise that we do not make excuses but find solutions so, of course, we put our heads together and came up with plan! We wrote and received a small grant to purchase dual language books in a variety of languages. We are also purchasing more titles in a variety of languages through OverDrive and now ensure that all of our regional database purchases are vetted to make sure they have the translation feature available. As our ELL population increases, we simply have to ensure equitable access for all.

Knowing that reading options in multiple languages will be available to our families through our school libraries brings us a great deal of pride. While our libraries have had small collections of books in a variety of languages for years, we are particularly thrilled that the dual language collection will provide our ELL students the ability to read with their families in both English and their native language, allowing parents to interact with their kids through literacy and perhaps, even, help parents learn English along with their children. This is a win-win for everyone and is our small way to help every student share their reading adventures with their family members in whatever language they choose!

About the Author

Doreen Bergman, MSLIS, is the School Library System Director for the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES. She holds New York state certifications in the areas of educational administration, childhood education, and school media. She received her master's degree from Syracuse University and was both an elementary and high school librarian as well as a classroom teacher. Her priority is to empower and support school librarians as educational leaders and collaborative co-teachers so that their library programs continue to positively impact student learning and achievement.

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Entry ID: 2199436