

## Providing All Students with the Opportunity to Learn

by Melissa Thom

When you think the word access in relation to librarianship, what comes to mind? For me, there are a variety of thoughts that flood into my brain such as not only physical access, but emotional and mental access as well. Donalyn Miller is one of my go-to experts when I start digging into this topic of access. In *Game Changer: Book Access for All Kids*, she and co-author Colby Sharp stress the importance of readers having access to physical books that they can choose and own.

We cannot stop at access alone though and must grapple with what it means to offer equitable access. Kimberly Gangwish, explains that "equitable access means that all—not some—students have the right to become educated and information literate. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) *Standards for the 21st Century Learner in Action* states that "equitable access is a key component for education" (Gangwish 2015). But, equitable access goes beyond funding or technology; it requires "that all students have equal opportunity to learn. School librarians have a responsibility to support successful learning for every student, preparing each for the information-rich world in which they will study and work" (Gangwish 2015). Equitable access and identifying the number of books in a reader's home is a tangible and achievable goal that all school librarians can set and work towards achieving. According to Margaret Merga, "access to books in the home appears to confer benefit for students' attitudes toward, and frequency of engagement in, recreational readings." But what about those that do not have access at home? "If students are not accessing books in the home, it is imperative that schools support students' access to books, and that efforts to maintain a book-rich home environment are not curtailed as students enter secondary school" (2015; pp. 207-208) Her research echoes that of Stephen Krashen who writes that "more access at home results in more reading" in his seminal work of *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research*. According to various studies, "the research supports the common sense view that when books are readily available, when the print environment is enriched, more reading is done. A print-rich environment in the home is related to how much children read; children who read more have more books in the home" (Krashen 2004).

While none of these studies and ideas should come as a surprise to those of us doing the work of a librarian, the struggle is often HOW do we provide the access we know is necessary and effective? Please view [my video](#) where I reflect on these ideas and the successes and challenges I have experienced overall, especially in the last year when everything has been more difficult. I have more questions than answers, but look forward to collaborating with each of you on this vitally important topic and hope to "see" you on the Flipgrid (<https://flipgrid.com/fdbca5d9>).

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