Fall 2026

# library bright ideas

Reach every reader in your elementary school library.




## Managing a Busy Specials Schedule

Classroom Management in the Library
Picture Book Voting
Veterans Day Lessons
Student Library Assistants
Trickster Tales & Representation
Lit Loot Reading Incentive

The digital magazine for elementary school librarians

**SCROLL**
**to take a look inside!**

# GREAT ARTICLES LIKE THESE

## BEYOND BOOK TASTINGS: A PERSONALIZED READING INCENTIVE THAT WORKS

by Christa Bell

Book tastings, read-alouds, and themed displays are wonderful ways to introduce students to new books. I use all of these strategies in my library, but I noticed many students still gravitated toward the same types of books or struggled to choose one at all.

I wanted every student to feel like they had a personal librarian who truly knew their interests.

That's how Lit Loot was born.

Lit Loot is a personalized reading program built around **mystery book bags** that combines student choice, readers' advisory, and a touch of surprise. Students complete a Lit Loot Request Form, and I carefully select a book based on their responses and reading history. They then receive a mystery bag filled with their new book and a few inexpensive goodies. Best of all, students get to keep the book, helping them build their own home libraries.

What started as a simple reading incentive has become **one of the most anticipated events in my library.** If you'd like to create something similar, here's how you can get started.



*Photo sent by a classroom teacher after she handed out the bags to students. They were all excited about their books!*

**Step 1: Learn About Your Readers**

The heart of Lit Loot is personalization. Students complete a Lit Loot Request Form that asks them to list their preferred genres and share any specific requests for their Lit Loot bag. It only takes a few minutes to complete, but it gives me valuable information that helps me match each reader with a book they'll enjoy.

At my elementary school, students complete the Lit Loot Request Form during their regularly scheduled library class. I typically offer Lit Loot once each semester, giving students time to discover new interests while allowing me to spread the work of selecting books throughout the school year.



## FIND IT, LOVE IT, READ IT: GENREFYING YOUR FICTION & NONFICTION

By Elizabeth Orona

Student voice and choice are a centerpiece of today's school library experience. A non-negotiable for all of my library classes is time for students to self-select books that interest and excite them. However, it's difficult for children to find the books they're looking for without a strong organization and labeling system in place that makes sense to students.

**My Goal for Genrefying**

When I took over my school library, it was really helpful that the books were already categorized into "neighborhoods" of fiction books, nonfiction books, everybody picture books, series books, and graphic novels. I wanted to make it as **student-centered** as possible so that readers in kinder through fifth grade could find the exact books that they needed. Over the past three years in my library, I have worked on several different projects to improve student independence and self-selection. It quickly became clear to me that I wouldn't be successful if I tried to re-organize the entire library at once (as much as I wanted to see quick results!).

My organization projects that I worked on each year went as follows:




*Genrefied graphic novel section with spine tape that matches my fiction genres*

**Year 1**

I used part of my library supply budget to purchase clear buckets for popular picture book characters and series books to go in. This provided a quick way to get some of my books forward-facing and easier for my younger readers to browse for choices.

I then made labels, laminated them, then hot-glued the labels to the front of the buckets.



## MANAGING A BUSY SPECIALS SCHEDULE

By Jill Dodge

**Background**

I am entering my 23rd year as a school librarian, and over the years I've tweaked and modified many little things that have helped me feel less overwhelmed during a busy school day. I've always been on a **fixed schedule as part of the specials rotation**, and I've never had a library aide. That means it's all on me to check books in and out, shelve them, plan lessons, teach classes, and handle all of my other library and school duties.

Some of these ideas may fit your personality and schedule, and some may not. Take what works for you, tweak it to fit your style, and create routines and procedures that help you make the most of your time.

**How in the World Can I Get These Books Checked In?**

For my first few years on the job, I used the basket method. Every afternoon before I went home, I dropped off a basket in the classrooms that would be coming to the library the next day. Then I relied on teachers to remember to send a student down with the book-filled baskets that morning. Inevitably, one or two teachers would forget, and I would spend part of my plan time tracking down books




and checking them in. That system works well for many librarians, and if it works for you, keep using it! I just decided to try something different to maximize my time.

Now my students simply carry their library books with them as they walk to the library. When they come in, they place the books on **two labeled spots on my desk**. After setting clear expectations with my students, this new routine has worked wonderfully and has given me my plan time back. I don't even use my book drop anymore, which saves me the time of digging books out later.

Once the books are on my desk, we immediately begin our library schedule following our set routine. One part of our daily routine is a video brain break. After

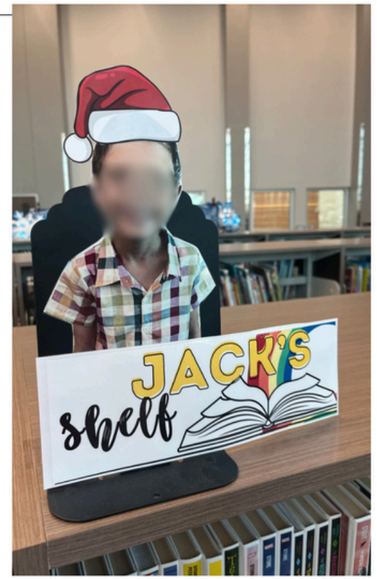
# FLIPPABLE PDF

## FOSTERING STUDENT LEADERSHIP WITH LIBRARY ASSISTANTS

By Jordan Hogan

Library shelving and basic housekeeping routines take up a lot of our time as librarians. As a group, so many of us often get behind on the day-to-day upkeep as we focus on lessons, programming, and collaborations. Whether or not a library has consistent volunteers, there are still willing and able helpers eager to support the library. The answer? Students! Students, no matter the grade level, are ready to step up and support the space they love so much.

A few years back, my campus set a goal to begin to weave student leadership into every space in our school. In the library, I began to plan for student leadership through a library assistant program. At the beginning stages of this initiative, I utilized fourth and fifth graders, but have since expanded to offer the opportunity to second through fifth graders, though responsibilities look a little different at each grade level.




*Students self-select a section to oversee each day. I label the shelf with their name and image, so other students can see who is helping maintain the library and also who is making book recommendations in that section.*

**The Selection Process**

Each year, my campus begins the year by offering a student leadership application, where students can apply for different leadership opportunities. The application is pushed out to the teachers during the second week of school to share with students. We prefer having the students fill out the form during their homeroom class, so that there is an accurate student account



## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN THE LIBRARY

By Paula Januzzi

Are disruptions breaking the flow of your lessons in the library? Are you feeling like the peaceful, engaging and fun environment you planned for is farther and farther from your reach? Try these easy-to-implement strategies to bring the joy you and your students deserve into the library.

My experience with classroom management spans over the past 40 plus years as a classroom teacher, special education teacher, district mentor for beginning teachers, literacy coach and now as an elementary school librarian. My years of teaching experience have been a huge benefit to me in the library; however, you don't have to have a classroom teaching background to enjoy being a school librarian.

My goal is for students to experience a love of reading. There are numerous routines and procedures that you can put into place that will contribute to a positive experience for you and your students. I became a librarian six years ago with a toolbox full of classroom management tools. Without these tools and effective management strategies, the library can feel chaotic and exhausting. When you have **routines and procedures in place**, the odds of spending your energy on teaching and focusing on the love of reading are higher and attainable. Using up energy to constantly correct or redirect behaviors may result in feeling defeated. Being in the library should feel joyful for you and the students.



*Vinyl circles for lining up*

**STARTING AT THE BEGINNING**

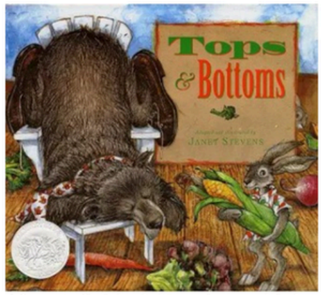
The tone is set for every class as they enter the library. **Establishing routines is critical.** While it is best to do this at the



## TRICKSTER TALES AND REPRESENTATION

by Trina Samson

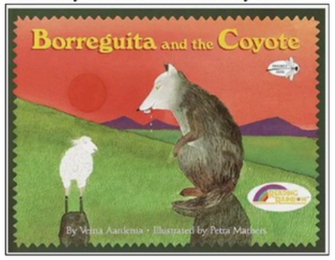
Recently I taught Trickster Tales to my 3rd graders. I started with *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens because it is such a perfect example of a trickster tale. The smaller animal is tricky, the larger animal is not very smart, plus it's just a funny story the kids love. The next week, I branched out worldwide and read *Zorro and Quwi* from Peru and *Anansi & the Magic Stick* from West Africa. The last week I read *Borreguita and the Coyote* from Mexico and *Coyote Steals the Blanket* which is a tale from Southwest Native Americans.




After we finished the unit, my third graders were interested in checking out books from their own cultures. I showed them books with folktales from Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Samoa. They were excited to check out books with stories from their own heritage.

I was happy they were interested in these books, and then later when I thought about it again, I was happy that I had those books to give them. We have students from a wide variety of backgrounds, and I have tried hard to make our school library reflect our students' cultures. The fact that I had a book to give every student who asked, is a big win for me and a sign that I'm succeeding in this area.

It is so important that our students see themselves in books. It is validation that they are important and their culture is important. It tells them that their circumstances are not unique and there are others out there like them. This can be comforting and a relief to many. It is also important for other students to read about different cultures so they can understand and respect the other students and their backgrounds. It creates empathy which will carry on into their adult years.



# ENGAGING LESSONS & ACTIVITIES

## ONE BOOK, ONE WORLD: CONNECTING STUDENTS ACROSS THE GLOBE

By Alice Reinert

One of my all-time favorite projects that I do every year in the library with my 2nd graders is the Global Read Aloud (GRA). Teacher and author Pernille Ripp founded the GRA in 2010 with one goal in mind: One Book to Connect the World. Its concept is simple– teachers all over the world read the same book during a set 6 week period and during that time try to make as many global connections as possible. Each facilitator is free to decide how much time to devote to the project or how involved they would like to be.

More than 4,000,000 students in 80 countries have participated in the GRA since its inception.

The GRA starts in early October and runs through mid-November. It consists of a Picture Book Study, Early Reader Book Group, Upper Elementary/Middle Grade Book Group, Middle School Book Group, and a YA Book Group.

**The Picture Book Study**

My 2nd grade students have participated in the GRA Picture Book Study in their library classes for the past 12 years. Because we have time constraints to work with, I find that the Picture Book Study is ideal for our situation. Some years we study a specific author and other years we focus on an illustrator and their artwork. Various authors/illustrators who have been featured in the past include: Jacqueline Woodson, Duncan Tonatiuh, Monique Gray Smith, Minh Le, Christian Robinson, and Oge Mora.

Each spring Pernille posts on the GRA Facebook page and on the GRA website the book choices for the current year. She invites anyone in the world to participate if they would like to.

I have 3 sections of 2nd graders and try to find two buddy classes to connect with throughout this 6 week period. I find two



## PROMOTING BOOK JOY THROUGH A VOTING UNIT

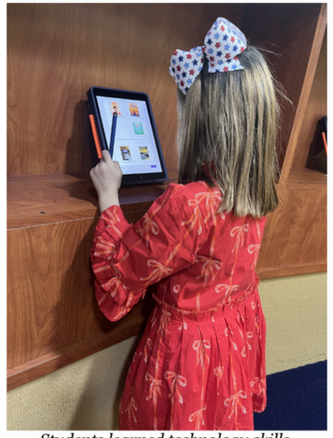
by Angie Jameson

**Sparking Book Joy**

After spending nine years as a secondary school librarian, moving to an elementary library serving first-, second-, and third-graders has been one of the best decisions of my career. Along with learning how differently young readers experience books, I also had the opportunity to dive into Ohio's Buckeye Book Award program. Although the program had been a long-standing tradition at my school, it was completely new to me, so I immersed myself in learning about the nomination and voting process.

One of our six whole-school days each year is dedicated to Buckeye Book Award voting, with classroom teachers joining in the excitement alongside library classes. Throughout the fall, we read every nominated title, discussed each book together, and students cast their votes over several weeks during library class. When the winning book was announced, we celebrated by rereading the title and finding fun ways to honor both the book and its author.

Whether your state offers a comprehensive state award program for books or not, this is certainly a program



*Students learned technology skills, including touchscreen technology and stylus use, through this experience of digital voting.*

you can implement on your own. If you are ready to get started right away, this article is for you. If you aren't so sure if you'd like to organize this before voting day, this article is also for you.

In Ohio, the State Library offers a program for students in K-12 schools to nominate their favorite books in the grade-level categories of K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 in the spring, and voting for the selected books takes place in the fall.



## VETERANS DAY LESSONS TO HONOR OUR MILITARY

by Amy Brownlee

Our school district hosts a biennial community Veterans Day ceremony. All students attend, preschool through seniors, and students help plan and take part in the ceremony. The high school band plays patriotic songs, and both the elementary and high school choirs sing.

Student council members invite veterans from the community to register ahead of time and sit in a special section at the assembly. Each veteran's name, military branch, and years of service are announced. The veterans are also the guests of honor at either a luncheon prior to the ceremony or a reception afterward.

Our community takes pride in honoring our veterans and making sure our students recognize and appreciate the sacrifice made by members of our military.

In order to build background knowledge in our young learners, I developed lessons and activities to prepare elementary students for the ceremony. My objective was for learners to understand why we celebrate Veterans Day and recognize the importance of showing respect and appreciation to those who have served.




*Bulletin board with student-created ribbons honoring veterans*

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