Making in the Library

By Tammy Hawley-House

Have you been hearing about makerspaces? They are popping up in school libraries throughout Idaho. If you wonder how a school library makerspace can benefit your classroom, here are a few examples:

- **Making is About Learning**: “Making,” the stuff happening in makerspaces, embraces a constructivism approach to education—one where learning happens by doing. School libraries offering maker opportunities create an environment and culture where student-driven learning, problem solving and entrepreneurial skills are naturally fostered. Students share ideas and help each other learn new skills. Makerspaces allow students to become facilitators and teach other students in a cooperative atmosphere.

- **Making nurtures necessary STEM job skills**: The making process is largely the same process used by persons in most STEM related jobs. Design Thinking is synonymous with making, in that a student starts with a problem and implements a solution, frequently testing and retrying until a refined solution emerges. STEM professionals of all sorts, like engineers, doctors, and computer programmers, practice these skills every day. By allowing the school library to be a place where students gain hands-on, practical experience through maker activities, we are better preparing our next generation for the future.

- **Making and writing - a marriage made in a parallel universe or...classroom**: A recent blog post by Colleen Graves shared the parallels of making and writing. Teaching in a making environment emphasizes the importance of iteration, where students systematically identify changes needed to improve what’s being designed or made. Writing teachers use a similar strategy with drafts and editing. If you look at the accompanying chart, you can see how both making and writing are about teaching students a series of skills in a deliberate order, to produce an end product. The charge of the educator is to stress the process in order to produce a quality product. Now... imagine a teacher/librarian collaboration with students making in the library, writing about their hands-on experience, and each step of the making/writing processes aligning beautifully.

These are just a few examples of how makerspaces are not only relevant in today’s school libraries, but fast becoming essential. More than 3D printing or high tech gadgetry, making is all about learning! In the end, we are all working toward the same goal: ensuring 21st century skills for ALL Idaho students. Making is a powerful step in getting us there.