Welcome

We now have over 300 subscribers to *The Scoop*! To all those old and new subscribers, here's the thought of the day:

*I think a good novel would be where a bunch of men on a ship are looking for a whale. They look and look, but you know what? They never find him. And you know why they never find him? It doesn't say. The book leaves it up to you, the reader, to decide. Then, at the very end, there's a page you can lick and it tastes like Kool-Aid.* -- *Jack Handey [Deep Thoughts], Recurring Saturday Night Live comedy bit*
Meet Leslie Bair

Leslie Bair is the Librarian at Sawtooth Middle School in Meridian. This is the second year for Sawtooth which is located in a high-growth area. The student population of 1,200 6th-8th graders increases daily.

Leslie is involved in all library activities - collection development, book talks, library instruction, research mentor, and "even a little storytime to each class at the beginning of each school year."

Collaboration with teachers is a high priority. "Our big push this year is for a high level of collaboration between the library and the teachers as we work together to make research projects and other endeavors that involve the library a positive and meaningful experience. We are starting the 8th grade PACE (Performance Assessment of Critical Elements) projects this year which will really involve the library. We are really excited about what is happening."

Leslie's biggest challenge is "getting ALL the teachers to recognize what you can do for them. Then the biggest rush is when the teachers get excited when they finally see the endless possibilities when they involve the library staff in their planning."

Leslie's favorite part of her job is interacting with the kids. "It's so exciting to have them come in and say, 'I loved the book you suggested. Is there another one like it?'"

What attracted Leslie to library service for youth? "My mother read to me as long as I can remember. She always changed the voice for each character and made books come alive. My paternal grandmother was a school librarian, and, in my middle years, I had a school librarian that was above and beyond the best. With all that going for me, and my natural love of books, how could I not be a librarian?"

As a child, Leslie read all of the Bobbsey Twins, Nancy Drew and "every Marguerite Henry book written. I read all of the Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan books and fell in love with Heathcliff from Wuthering Heights when I was in junior high."

Favorite children's authors and books now include Will Hobbs' adventure books and Margaret Haddix's Shadow Children series. "I loved Touching Spirit Bear and The Raging Quiet and the list is endless. How can you have a favorite author? I still laugh out loud every
time I think of one of the Malloy girls taking Mr. Hatford's boxers off of the clothesline in *The Girls Get Even*. I love reading fantasy and dysfunctional stories."

Recently, Leslie has read and enjoyed *City of Ember* and *People of Sparks*, and, on an adult level, *Kite Runner*.

When not working at the library, Leslie enjoys playing games with and reading to her grandchildren. She also likes to work in her flowerbeds and enjoys hiking.

In conclusion, Leslie says, "I love being a librarian! I love the students and staff at my school and I love helping them make the book connection!"

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**Library to Library**

Erin Hasler has been selected to receive the 2005 Gardner Hanks Scholarship in the amount of $500. She lives in Boise and is employed full-time as Youth Services Librarian at Ada Community Library. She is pursuing a MLIS degree through distance learning from the University of Washington Information School in Seattle. Erin is currently enrolled in three courses, working to complete nine credit hours of the 63 quarter hours of course work required to receive her degree.

Erin served two and one half years in Togo, West Africa, with the Peace Corps, promoting girls’ education and empowerment, and has been employed in the youth services department of Meridian Library District and Ada Community Library. Erin is described as “a conscientious, motivated individual” whose “programs for children and teens are fresh, innovative, and always crowded.” She has participated in collaborative efforts with other Treasure Valley libraries, and it has been observed that “her kindness…energy and love toward everything, and the connections she has formed with…young and old, make her invaluable to her community.” A recent supervisor remarked, “Erin is one of the brightest and most dedicated individuals in this profession.” Congratuations Erin!

April Harward was hired this summer as the youth services librarian for the Community Library in Ketchum. Previously she worked as the library clerk in the Champaign Early Childhood Center in Champaign, IL, and as a senior specialist of technical services at the Marriot Library at the University of Utah. A Pocatello native, she graduated from the University of Utah in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in English literature with adolescent and children's literature as a focus. Welcome April!
Geraldine Maniere (pictured at right), is now a school librarian at Wood River High School.

Linda Brilz, Boise Public Library, shared a tip for getting books for summer reading give aways. She writes to publishers and asks for donated books. She recommends contacting any children's book publisher and says to be specific about what age children will be receiving the books.

Teresa Lynch from Payette Public Library was able to get 50 pumpkins donated by a local farm. They lined them up around the library this month and let their storyhour children each pick one out to take home after reading some great books like *In Search of the Perfect Pumpkin* by Gloria Evangelista. Teresa says it helped the library get in the holiday spirit and it was so fun to watch the children pick out their pumpkins (although it sounds like it was a little hard on her car’s shocks since she was the one who hauled all fifty pumpkins from the farm to the library!). *Great idea for next year!*

**Young Adult Corner**

Public and school librarians who attended the YALSA "Power Up with Print" Institute in Nampa, Coeur d'Alene, and Idaho Falls in September listed their recommended books for young adults. [See the complete list in PDF format].

**NexGen YS: Libraries Need Game**

By Dylan Baker

Any librarian can tell you that libraries are not just books. Libraries have been colonized by a smattering of new media formats, such as CDs and DVDs. Doing so has positioned us to provide access to what the public wants, whether it’s the latest pop album or the newest movie release. Responding to the public’s desires strengthens the library’s role in the community, drawing in new users and bringing them back again and again.

But although most libraries have done well to stock their shelves with music and movies, they’ve all but ignored one of the media types most popular with youth: videogames. Whether it’s an XBox, PlayStation 2 or GameCube, many families have one of these systems (if not all three). More than 248 million video games
were sold in 2004 alone, in addition to those rented from stores such as Blockbuster or Hastings (Source: http://www.theesa.com/facts/top_10_facts.php) Of these games sold, eighty-three percent were rated either “E” for Everyone or “T” for Teen.

Of course, numbers are only one side of the story. Tune your ears to the children that frequent your library and you’ll likely hear all sorts of videogame lingo tossed back and forth. The most popular games, such as Pokémon, have spawned empires of spin-offs including novels, movies and picture books. Other times books and movies have inspired new videogames of their own. It’s apparent that videogames play a large role in youth culture and the mediascape as a whole.

Despite the rising clamor for videogames, few libraries have embraced this new frontier. Perhaps we’ve been frightened off by the raging controversy that surrounds videogames, from the early Mortal Kombat to today’s Grand Theft Auto. Maybe we’ve questioned the “literary merit” of a collection, suspecting that videogames are nothing more than shoot-’em-ups. Quite possibly we’ve fretted over the cost and commitment necessary to develop such a collection.

But none of these excuses are sufficient to keep videogames out of libraries and out of the hands of our patrons. The debate that surrounds videogames is merely the latest incarnation of the outcries that slammed comic books and rock music in decades past. Despite the vocal protests once fired against these types of materials, they’ve found homes in many libraries. Stereotyping all videogames for their lack of “literary merit” is possible only if you focus on a select few. Quite a few games feature immersive storylines, detailed characters, and a surprising amount of deduction and puzzle-solving.

Concerning the cost of developing such a collection, I offer my own library’s experience as an example. When the Ada Community Library added a videogame collection in February 2005, only $425 was spent to purchase twenty titles. We focused on purchasing games that had an enduring positive reputation, yet also had been around long enough to reach bargain prices. At about $20 a game, the cost was comparable to buying a couple hardcover books or a new DVD feature. Even a meager budget can beget a modest videogame collection.

In addition to the monetary cost, it takes commitment to develop a new videogame collection from the ground up. Keep your eyes and ears open for the buzz that surrounds new videogames and old favorites. Get your gaming patrons reading by tying in other collections with offerings like gaming magazines or spin-off novel series. Most importantly, carefully select and try a videogame or two yourself – you might be surprised by how much it’ll remind you of that feeling of reading a good book or watching a good movie.

Libraries have stayed out of the game for far too long now. It’s time we stop making excuses and start making videogames a part of the library. Game on.
What do you think about libraries circulating video games? Send your feedback to The Scoop, peggy.mcclendon@libraries.idaho.gov.

Book Look

Here are the final three nominees for the 2006 Young Reader's Choice Awards (YRCA) sponsored by the Pacific Northwest Library Association (PNLA). To see the complete list, visit their web site at http://www.pnla.org/yrca/index.htm. Only youth in Idaho who have read two or more of the nominated books (published in 2003) are eligible to vote.

Intermediate Division - 7th to 9th grade

THE RIVER BETWEEN US by Richard Peck

This Civil War novel, set in Illinois, tells the story of 15-year-old Tilly Pruitt and the mysterious visitors, Delphine Duval and her companion Calinda, who arrive from New Orleans to stay with Tilly's family. Why have they come and who are they? The answers are revealed when Tilly's twin brother Noah joins the Union Army and Tilly and Delphine are sent to bring him home. The legacy of the Civil War, which tore apart families and shaped a nation, becomes the backdrop to one family's story, revealing their true identities and demonstrating racism's far reach. The author introduces and closes the novel using Tilly's grandson Howard Hutchings to tell how he first heard of these events fifty years later and discovered his father's true parentage. The fine use of meticulously-researched historical detail, gentle humor and secrets is sure to hook readers.

Visit author Richard Peck's web site: http://www.richardpeck.smartwriters.com/

Online resources for The River between Us include this literature circle guide from Scholastic. http://teacher.scholastic.com/clubs/pdfs/riverbetweenus_t.pdf.

SHAKESPEARE BATS CLEANUP by Ron Koertge

Written in free verse, the story of 14-year-old Kevin Boland takes exploration through writing to new places. Writing becomes an escape for Kevin while he is home for two months recuperating from mono. He begins writing poetry to pass the time and comes to find himself examining his feelings about his love of baseball and desire to be a sports star one day, his junior high romances, and the recent death of his mother. Humorous and poignant, Kevin's struggles ring true. What he
learns about himself and how he deals with his issues is sure to capture teens' interest.


Senior Division - 10th to 12th grade

TIME TRAVELER’S WIFE by Audrey Niffenegger

Time is a major element in this novel. The story is told in flashbacks and flash forwards that may seem confusing at first, but help build suspense that keeps the reader turning pages to find out not only how the story ends, but when.

Slowly, the story and the characters are revealed through a nonlinear timeline that is dizzying at times. Chapter headings state the location and the age of Henry and Clare. Henry and Clare are not an ordinary couple. Henry time travels---not at will, but unpredictably--through his own life. On one of his travels he meets his future wife Clare who becomes an anchor both for Henry and the reader. When Henry meets Clare for the first time in real time, she is 20 and he is 28, but Clare has known Henry since she was six. The ups and downs of relationships are explored in this unique context. Sexual content makes this a book for mature teens only, but one that will stay with them after the last page has been turned.


Summer Reading News

The Daring Dreamers summer reading advocacy advisory group met on October 21st in Boise. They were convened to help the State Library plan the second year of a multi-phase campaign to raise awareness and build support for library summer reading programs. Two-person teams--director and youth services staff person--representing these libraries attended: Prairie River District Library, Lewiston City Library, Kootenai Shoshone Area Libraries, Ada Community
Library, McCall Public Library, Portneuf District Library, and Burley Public Library.

The librarians provided feedback on how collaborating with school libraries worked for the "Read for Your Library" incentive program. Most found the opportunity to partner a positive experience and increased their participation. Challenges they faced included getting an appointment with the principal, school schedules, and school staff turnover. The fall school assembly to recognize summer readers received high marks in importance. Recommendations included: providing the school incentive in the fall rather than at the beginning of the summer and starting earlier with school contacts. If you have suggestions about the "Read for Your Library" incentive program or any of the other summer reading advocacy efforts, please contact Peggy at peggy.mcclendon@libraries.idaho.gov.

Collaboration Nets $400,000 for Summer Reading in Treasure Valley

Linda Brilz, youth services librarian at Boise Public, recently shared information about the successful collaboration efforts of LYNX consortium members in the Treasure Valley this past summer. Working together they raised $400,000 in prizes to use as reading incentives and publicity for seven libraries: Boise Public, Ada Community, Garden City Public, Meridian District, Eagle District, Nampa Public, and Caldwell Public. How did they do it? With careful planning, focus and vision, they approached potential funders with a request for prizes and publicity that would benefit all libraries and help reach 17,000 kids in the area.

Starting last November, here is what they did:

- Developed a mission statement
- Developed levels of sponsorship and what donors would get in return
- Created a one-page flyer listing their mission, number of target children, participating libraries, and levels of sponsorship available
- Developed a list of potential sponsors to contact and made assignments
- Called or met face-to-face with potential donors and solicited for the entire consortium
- Set up a web site for a centralized contact place and to thank their sponsors

Tips for starting a similar collaborative effort in your area:

- Start planning in the fall for the following summer
- Decide what geographic area you want to cover (county-wide, consortium-wide, etc.) and ask every library to send one staff member to meetings
- Decide on one person to convene meetings and establish an agenda
- Meet on a regular basis and establish a meeting time and place
• Take meeting notes and distribute them via email
• Set a timeline for activities
• Decide on guidelines for accepting donations and who gets what ahead of time (for example, what to do if a donor does not give an item for every library)
• Stay positive. Don't be discouraged when a potential donor says no. Overall you will be successful.

How successful was the Treasure Valley group? Consortium members saw a combined 30% increase in summer reading participation. To visit their web site, go to: www.idahokidsread.org.

School Zone

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) held its 12th National Conference in Pittsburgh, PA, October 6-9, 2005. The theme of the conference was "Every Student Succeeds @ Your Library." Almost 3900 people attended, including at least six people from Idaho. The four school librarians pictured above from the Meridian School District attended (from left to right: Lois Schneider (standing), Gena Marker, Renee Hawkley and Pam Rybus). We asked those individuals who attended to share a little about the experience with readers of The Scoop. In this issue, former State Librarian Charles Bolles and Eagle Middle School librarian Pam Rebus hit on the highlights:

Every Student Succeeds @ Your Library, by Charles Bolles

American Association of School Librarians (AASL) held its 12th National Conference in Pittsburgh, PA October 6-9, 2005. Almost 3900 school librarians, exhibitors, and friends attended the conference which was held in a magnificent convention center overlooking the Allegheny River in downtown Pittsburgh. Following are some impressions and comments from someone who would categorize himself as a friend.

Perhaps the impression that remains with me most clearly two weeks after the conference was the enthusiasm that the attendees had for making school library/media centers (for simplicity’s sake, I will refer to them as school libraries from here on out) an integral element of the K-12 learning environment. The focus of the conference, whose theme was “Every Student Succeeds @ Your Library”, was just that, providing ideas and encouragement to attendees on how to help the student have a richer educational experience through instruction and services provided at the school library. An observation that is not restricted to the school library community is the graying of the profession. It certainly appeared that there were many more attendees over 50 than under 35. Granted it was a relatively expensive venture to attend the conference, which may have prevented younger librarians from attending. The enthusiasm was high, but, in my opinion, a younger audience would have added a vitality that would have been invigorating. Too
many times in program sessions, one heard comments as to why something wouldn’t work or that it had been tried and failed at their school.

The keynote speaker in the opening General Session was Ken Carter, the coach chronicled in the film "Coach Carter," starring Samuel L Jackson. Coach Carter achieved national recognition when he locked his undefeated basketball team out of the gym for two weeks (forfeiting several games) because his players had not kept their contract with him to keep their studies up. Coach Carter is a dynamic speaker, supplemented by clips from the popular movie. His message was that you have to have enthusiasm for your work, discipline to carry out that work as best you can, and conviction that you are making a difference. He asked each member in the audience to validate themselves and their neighbors as school librarians and assure each other of the importance of what they do. Coach Carter identified the school library as “the house of learning.”

There were over a hundred sessions offered over two days in seven different time slots. Usually there were fourteen or fifteen program opportunities in any given time slot, making a choice of what to attend extremely difficult. These offerings were not separated into tracts or interest areas as is often seen in conferences. My categorization of them will be much different than that of another attendee, but this is how I would categorize the general program areas.

**Research and Evaluation:** There was at least one preconference: POWER LIBRARIANSHIP: Research Based Strategies for Leadership, Collaboration, and Technology; a closing General Session featuring a panel discussing the latest research on student achievement utilizing the school library and how the school librarian can use it; and several program sessions on how to evaluate the effectiveness of your school library. The theme of these presentations and programs were that school libraries do make a difference. Students who use the school library have higher achievement scores than those that do not; teachers who work cooperatively with the school librarian have better classroom results, whether it be in reading scores, social studies, or the sciences; and school librarians who aggressively gather measurable data that shows the status of their library collections or the benefits that they are providing the curriculum in a support role are much more likely to be able to influence their administrations to better support the school library.

**Marketing/Advocacy:** This theme is closely related to the former theme but concentrated on helping the librarian develop strategies for influencing students, teachers, and administrators as to the importance of school libraries and how to provide better funding. Generally, these programs were of the “How we did it good” nature, with a team of presenters from a school district including the school librarian, district coordinator, and the school principal outlining some technique that had successfully been used to gain the attention of the target audience. There is no one magic formula, but attendees were advised to review what others had done and then pick out an approach that would work in their school. There was a strong emphasis on the school librarian having to work collaboratively with other
teachers and administrators to put the school library in its most effective light. There also were some programs in this category outlining statewide activities to bring greater attention to the school library and school librarians. Oklahoma, for example, has taken the major categories identified in AASL’s and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology’s Information Power, and is developing an assessment tool to show how much time the school librarian spends on each category in order to impress on administrators their contributions to the educational process.

**Technology:** Probably the most popular programs were those devoted to utilizing technology with the students and in the school library. There were at least two programs on utilizing blogs with teen-aged students. Other programs classed under this category included both how to utilize Google to help students find information for research projects and also how to go beyond Google to develop more targeted search strategies. Even total quality management techniques were presented to develop an environment of continuous improvement within the K-6 school library to encourage students to become more self reliant and to relieve the school librarian of many of the more repetitive tasks in a day’s work. A particularly tantalizing program title that I did not have the opportunity to attend was “The Technology Race: Who Wins, the Tortoise or the Hare?” or “Experiences of High School Students Conducting Term Research Using Filtered Internet Access.” Both offered at the same time slot with several other interesting programs.

Two themes running throughout the conference were Collaboration and Best Practices. There were program sessions on collaboration such as “Collaboration: A Primary Source Story” and “Drivers Ed for Collaborators: Overcoming Roadblocks, Hazards and Detours.” The first of these is a case study from a school district in Wisconsin where social studies teachers, the school librarian, the technology coordinator and the special education teacher collaborated with a documents-based curriculum that developed a higher level of thinking skills in their students. The second was a how we do it well in Maine, detailing the benefits of collaboration on a statewide level. Collaboration was often a key element of other programs such as the POWER LIBRARIANSHIP preconference mentioned earlier.

Best Practices is exactly what the heading implies, usually case studies that have worked particularly well for a school district or an individual school librarian. These range from giving effective book talks, the use of graphic novels with high school students and how to get the most out of an author visit. Next to the technology programs, this category of program probably was most popular. School librarians are always on the lookout for new ideas that they can utilize at home.

Visiting the exhibits is always a rewarding experience. Because of the size of this conference and the fact that it was concentrating on school libraries, the exhibits at Every Student Succeeds @ Your Library were particularly interesting and
valuable. Whether you wanted to touch base with an electronic database vendor, a library supplies dealer, a publisher of K-12 books, or library furniture salesman, this was your opportunity. The Exhibit Area was attractive and the vendors had elaborate displays and booths with many giveaways. On the last day some of the book publishers were giving away the display books so they would not have to ship them home.

The National AASL Conferences are held every two years. I certainly felt that my time was well spent, and I learned a great deal during the four days that I was at the conference. I would strongly recommend any school librarian or anyone interested in school libraries to attend if you ever have the opportunity. You may well have the opportunity of doing so; the 13th National AASL Conference is going to be held in Reno, NV in late October 2007. Start planning! (Dr. Charles Bolles is the former State Librarian at the Idaho State Library. He currently serves in a consultant capacity on the State Library Staff.)

A new school librarian gets a lot out of AASL, by Pam Rybus

This was my first AASL conference, and it was wonderful! I am new to this profession. I was a classroom teacher for 21 years and have only been a librarian (and half time at that) for the past year. I still have a lot to learn, and I learned a lot at this conference.

It is amazing what school librarians are doing around the country. A few sessions in particular were especially energizing. The first was entitled “The Library as Sanctuary.”

Lynn Evarts from Sauk Prairie High School in Prairie du Sac, WI, spoke passionately about the power of librarians to help kids who just don’t fit in. She takes bold steps to make her library patrons feel comfortable and to create a “sanctuary.” She urged us to not be paralyzed by fear when selecting books for students. Many students who don’t fit in are struggling and turn to books for answers to the issues in their life. She gets to know her students and suggests books, or will shelve a book she thinks a student may be interested in in a section that they frequent. She urged us to be sneaky! She also has “blue star” books. This really made a few of us squirm. These books have the security strip removed. They are the books that students may feel uncomfortable checking out. Any student can come in and eat lunch in her library, and it is packed with students every day. She also has included books in her collection that speak to the kids who don’t fit in. Contact me (see e-mail below) if you would like this list.

Another powerful workshop was given by a middle and high school librarian team. Their engaging presentation gave me many ideas about reading promotion. A few examples are: passport to reading program, checking out i-Pods with audio books downloaded, checking out magazines, GORG (groove on reading group) teen advisory group, and book friend raisers (teachers and students read the same book and talk.) Their PowerPoint has some great pictures of displays and
examples of their programs. You can find it at: www.conniepappas.com. Click on “schools.”

These are only a few examples. Each day we got up early and didn’t stop until the late hours of the night. We went to breakfasts to learn about new databases, an incredible storytelling festival, the displays, and workshop after workshop. We just didn’t stop.

We left full of enthusiasm and with many, many new ideas. We also had boxes of free books and posters too! (Pam Rybus is the librarian at Eagle Middle School. She can be reached at Rybuspm@meridianschools.org.)

Thank you, Pam and Charlie, for writing up your view on the conference. We hope to hear from a few more who attended in the next Scoop.

Know the Numbers

In the last issue of The Scoop, we talked about how to find the number of children in your service area, by age. This two-page PDF handout with screen shots walks you through the process.

Remember, these statistics can be used in a variety of ways, such as community analysis, service planning, grant writing, budget justification, reports (like Summer Reading!), and outreach efforts.

A Closer Look at Public-School Library Cooperation

Public libraries and school libraries have a great opportunity to work together to reach families during Idaho Family Reading Week, November 13-19. Fifty participating libraries will receive banners and two give away books to encourage families to come to family reading events at their libraries. The libraries will also be entered into a drawing to win a visit from authors Joy Steiner or Karma Wilson. Libraries may still apply for the materials until October 31st by faxing in
Idaho librarians have come up with some creative ideas. Here are a few of the events that are planned:

**Family Scrapbook Night** and **book drive**: Lewiston City Library will partner with Operation Wish Book, Lewiston School District and Lewis Clark State College Education Program. Lewiston City youth services librarian Heather Stout will visit all seven elementary schools--Whitman, Webster, Orchards, McSorley, McGhee, Centennial, and Camelot--during the first two weeks of November to do booktalks, promote the book drive and issue invitations to Family Scrapbook Night which will be held at the public library on November 16.

**Family Literacy Night**: The Caldwell Public Library is working with its partners: Caldwell School District, Families First, Treasure Valley Even Start, Head Start, First Book of Canyon County, and Alpha Delta Kappa service organization, to sponsor an evening event at Van Buren Elementary School on November 15. Activities include a dinner, musical entertainment, reading workshop for parents, a separate reading activity for children, and a reader's theater presentation for the entire family. Every child who attends will go home with a free book.

**Dinner and a Book**: The Larsen Sant Library in Preston and its partners Oakwood Elementary School, H.B. Lee Elementary School, and Pioneer Elementary School will provide a free dinner at the public library. Families can visit three story stations set up around the library, one of which will be in Spanish. Teachers and school librarians will help read stories and every child will receive a free book.

"**Pop, Pop, Fizz, Fizz, Oh, What Fun Family Reading Is!**" is the name of South Bannock County District Library's week-long event. Families who come to the library will receive a 2-liter bottle of pop and a bag of microwave popcorn to enjoy at home while reading. On November 16th, So. Bannock's partner, Mountain View Elementary School will have a celebration called "**Reading is the Ticket.**" Throughout the month of November, children can earn "tickets" for a drawing of special prizes. At the celebration, Harry Potter will make an appearance and a drawing for prizes will be held. Another partner, Inkom Elementary School, will have a pajama pizza party on November 17th featuring a guest reader.
Tips & Tools

If you are looking for a great resource for author interviews, news about prominent children's books, and other information about children's book publishing, you may want to subscribe to "Children's Bookshelf" newsletter, a free weekly e-newsletter created by children's book editors at Publisher's Weekly. To subscribe or to read past issues online, go to: http://www.publishersweekly.com/PWdaily/CA6253324.html.

School improvements funds available. Lowe's Companies, Inc. will award grants to parent-teacher organizations and parent-teacher associations for improvement projects at up to 1,000 schools across the United States. Launched in partnership with PTO Today, an organization serving parent-teacher groups, Toolbox for Education will provide grants of up to $5,000 for a wide range of efforts, including public school libraries, specialty learning labs, landscaping, painting projects, and playgrounds. Grants are still available for the 2005-06 school year. See www.toolboxforeducation.com for more information.

Another resource is the newly launched Criticas magazine web site: www.criticasmagazine.com. Criticas is the only U.S. magazine in English which provides news, reviews, features, author interviews and more on Spanish-language books, audiobooks, and videos. The web site is free and no registration is required.

Here's a few new books from the State Library's collection available for checkout. Contact the State Library at 1-800-458-3271 or check out the web site at www.lili.org for more information about getting a library card and getting materials mailed to and from your library for free!

Educating the Net Generation, edited by Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger, (2005). This is an in-depth look at how the generation growing up in the 1990s and 2000s is using, understanding, and working with technology and how this impacts their learning. (ISL 378.1 Educati)

Booktalks Plus: Motivating Teens to Read, by Lucy Schall, (2001). Booktalks looks at more than 100 quality young adult titles published between 1996 and 1999. Booktalks and activities are included. (ISL 028.5 Schall)

Copyright for School: A Practical Guide, by Carol Simpson, (2001, 3rd edition) The latest edition provides clear, easy to understand definitions for copyright, fair use and how these issues affect all formats of resources. (ISL 346.7304 Simpson)
Early beginning is key to childhood learning

WASHINGTON STATE -- School officials spend lots of time and money trying to figure out how to close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students.

But Lynn Fielding, co-founder of the National Children's Reading Foundation, believes those investments should be made before children enter kindergarten.

"Virtually 100 percent of the reading achievement gap occurs prior to kindergarten," said Fielding, who will conduct a training in Lacey, WA about an early childhood program that he helped create for the Kennewick Schools. "If you're behind in reading in fourth grade, chances are you were behind in kindergarten."

Fielding and educator Stephen Halliday teamed up to create "Ready! for kindergarten," a training program that has reached more than 6,000 parents in the Kennewick School District during the past three years.

The two are presenting information about their program at schools, libraries and other venues all over the state during the next week, hoping to energize groups to take on similar efforts in other school districts.

"It's for educators or anyone who works in preschools or health care," said Nancy Kerr, president of the National Children's Reading Foundation. School board members and other policymakers are also encouraged to attend the seminar, Fielding said.

The morning session will cover some of the latest research and data on early learning and parental involvement. The afternoon session will cover how to train parents to help their children get ready for kindergarten.

60 percent prepared

Fielding said about 60 percent of students enter kindergarten prepared with the necessary skills they'll need to keep up with their classmates. About 20 percent enter kindergarten with skills of a typical 4-year-old, and the remaining 20 percent enter with skills of 2- or 3-year-olds.

"That's the group that we spend huge amounts of money trying to catch up," Fielding said. "The real gap was what happened from birth to kindergarten," he said.

In Kennewick, parents attend three 90-minute training sessions a year. Those sessions are packed with early learning strategies for their child's age and development, from birth to age 5, Fielding said.
Parents who live in the district can attend the sessions for free, and child care is provided for children older than 12 months. The Kennewick School District spends about $220,000 a year on the program. It's paid for with state I-728 and local levy funds, Fielding said.


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