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President's Message

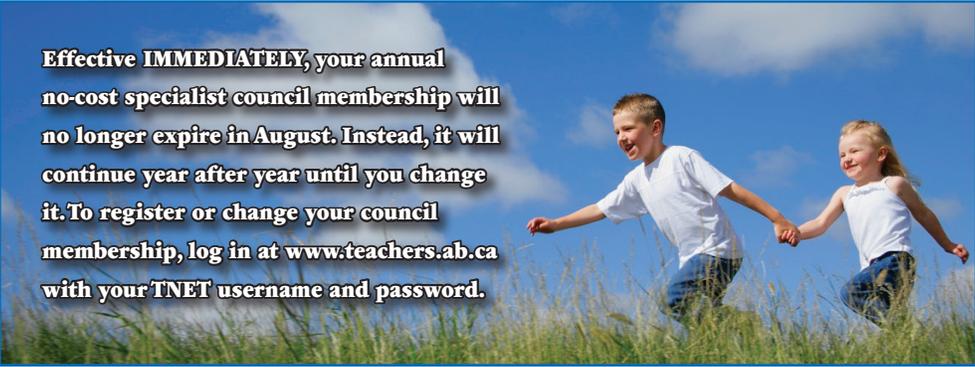
I don't know about you, but I am done with winter, snow, ice and unplowed streets. To welcome spring, whether we feel it outside or not, I have a new book to share. *Tap the Magic Tree*, by Christie Matheson, is a lovely story about the life cycle of an apple tree. What makes it special is the interactive nature of the story. Children are invited to tap, rub and blow on the pages. It reminds me of *Press Here*, by Herve Tullet. I can envision lovely trees with tissue paper additions as the seasons pass.

I found another great read at the Pages Book Store booth at the Calgary Regional Winter Potpourri workshop at the end of January. *Open This Little Book*, by Jesse Klausmeier, and illustrated by Suzy Lee, is delightful and was recommended by the Pages staff. It is a book within a book within a book. You open the little red book and read about a ladybug that opens a little green book and reads about a frog, and it follows with different colours and different characters that help each other. Each book inside is smaller than the one before.

Your executive council met in Edmonton the first weekend in February to discuss and plan ways to meet our members' needs. Please contact us if you have concerns. Any suggestions for professional development can also be posted on Ning, our professional social network.

Conference 2014 will be held in Edmonton, November 6-8. The lineup of speakers looks excellent for this fabulous affair. For more information, visit our website. ECEC also has a Facebook page. Look us up!

Joy de Nance



Effective **IMMEDIATELY**, your annual no-cost specialist council membership will no longer expire in August. Instead, it will continue year after year until you change it. To register or change your council membership, log in at www.teachers.ab.ca with your TNET username and password.

In This Issue

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Conference 2013

Advocate for Young Children Award

Anna Kirova, a professor in early childhood education, at the University of Alberta, received the Advocate for Young Children Award. Anna advocates for young children at many levels. She is a proactive and progressive educator who challenges students' perspectives on how children learn. She was instrumental in the establishment of a graduate program in early education at the U of A. Anna's research and scholarly work provide insight into children's culturally and linguistically diverse school experiences. Her work encourages teachers to acknowledge, respect and listen to all voices in a classroom.

ECEC Award



L–R: Gail Danysk and president Joy de Nance.

importance of early learning, Gail worked diligently to promote best practice in Calgary classrooms. Congratulations, Gail!

Fran Galbraith

Session Summaries

Where Is Your Shirt From? Using Rigour, Relevance and Relationships to Build Authentic Curriculum

Presented by Mary Cowhey, Keynote Speaker

From the moment Mary Cowhey stepped on the stage, in Kananaskis, she had everyone thinking. Her first few words were ones of graciousness for being in our country and surrounded by people who wanted to see passion and growth in students in ways that personalized their learning. Her next words provided the foundation for her whole talk: "I would like you to have your friend look at the tag on the back of your shirt, and in a moment we are going to tally where it was made." For many this might seem like an odd statement, because why would you need to know about your shirt in a room full of early childhood educators? Well it soon became apparent that it was so much more than that shirt.

Mary continued to talk about the kinds of students she works with in a high-needs area close to Boston. These students, much like our own, work on building skills in many areas, especially understanding the world around them. One day, as she was trying to bring the world into the classroom, she introduced bears into her classroom as a way to spur on writing with her students. Suddenly the children asked questions about why the animals did not have clothes, which then led to the discussion of where clothes are made.

This evolved into an incredible adventure about how and why clothing manufacturing has changed, where the largest manufacturers were and are located and so on. This all took place because of a link to exploration and a question that needed to be answered.

The importance, as Mary so nicely put it, is they were allowed to play and expand on their learning through real-life experiences making it meaningful and authentic.

When Writing Is Play

Presented by Kathy Stinson, Keynote Speaker

Canadian author Kathy Stinson graced us with her presence and incredible accomplishments. She has written picture books, documentaries, novels and even adult books, and has received many accolades from several areas of the writing world.

What struck so many of us was her wit and eagerness to focus on the conference theme, “Play It ... Again,” with her use of the English language to point out that scientists play with theories, violinists play with music and writers play with words. She created humour and engagement with the understanding of how play is used in the English language in so many ways; for example, not playing with a full deck or a play on words.

This presentation did not seem like one because Kathy was so careful at capturing her audience that suddenly we realized time had flown by, and we had just been part of something very special. It truly was an honour to listen to her as she played with words for us to embrace.

The Sky Is Not Blue?

Lisa Schoeler

Lisa Schoeler spoke of her work with her last year’s Grade 1 class of diverse students. In her session she walked participants through the process that became an inquiry of learning that was so much more than just colours.

After exploring pictures and colour books and learning vocabulary, it became apparent that the students were interested in learning about the sky. They learned about its texture, looked at pictures of the sky at various times of the day and read books about the sky. As they explored they realized that the sky consists of many colours, not only blue.

After reading one story about being unable to see all of the colours of the world, they decided to call on experts to find out more. They learned that people with disabilities are lonely because no one will speak to them, so the students became passionate about doing

something to help. As they spoke to the experts, they embarked on a project with the CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind) to create a book to raise funds for one of its programs.

This wonderful presentation showed the power of children of various needs and socioeconomic levels to create something that would make the difference for others.

Printmaking Made Easy: Washes and Watercolour Techniques

Lani M Loewen



As a first-time presenter at the conference, Lani Loewen showed lots of diversity and fun for new and veteran teachers. She was excited, and it showed.

Throughout both sessions Lani answered questions, provided resources, discussed variations of her work and allowed time to create. She made it exciting while stressing the importance of teaching skills to students through the understanding of the art curriculum.





She talked about ways to make art real for kids: (1) use pictures from artists; (2) discuss line, shape and form and (3) use recycled and inexpensive materials whenever possible. Her most important point was that art must be appreciated and valued. Students must understand that art is a process, and skills have to be built.

Overall it was fun and creative, and everyone had a chance to play.

Kim Wrathall

Environment, Genes, Brain Development, Literacy and Health

Bryan Kolb



Bryan Kolb spoke about play in the context of brain development. He provided us with much food for thought. All organisms respond to their environment, and brain cells experience changes for 30–35 years, developing more

connections and complexity. Stress has a major influence on brain development. A reduction in play leads to a reduction in prefrontal connections, while touching play is necessary to develop complexity in these cells. The first three years of a child's life are critical to language development, which is enhanced by early tactile stimulation and play.

In a following session, Bryan spoke about the developing prefrontal cortex and behaviour. Emphasizing that social experience is critical to language learning, while the brain retains its plasticity from prenatal through adolescence, he introduced us to several areas of development and the types of social experience for each. For an infant the social experience would be through serve and return, which requires the participation of a person for development, while during the juvenile stage peer play is central to development. Social play is correlated with social competence, which has a direct connection to school success. Social competence leads to the sense of self or “who I am.”

Play leads to social competence. Social competence leads to language success. Play is essential to teachers' work. Let's keep it central in our daily work.

Hop on Pop, Click on Poptropica. A Preschooler's New Way of Learning Literacy

Suzanna Wong

Old literacy practices, such as cooking, baking and sewing, are often embedded with new literacies, such as blogs, YouTube and iPad apps. A laptop set on the stove-top to consult electronic recipes while cooking is one example of this.

Often the tools we use for the old practices are new. While conducting research, Suzanna watched a four-year-old boy create a Lego review using both. This boy started by opening his Lego book to find inspiration. Then, using his iPad, he watched a Lego review on YouTube to learn instructions. Afterward, he visited the print instructions and remixed all these different textural landscapes creating his own Lego review video, which was uploaded to YouTube. His review critiqued the Lego box set by stating, “I used this part for this part, not like the box.”

Teachers of young learners may not have imagined this blend of literacy practices; however, it may be beneficial to our classes to recognize and utilize the expertise and passion many young learners bring to class.

Around the Conference



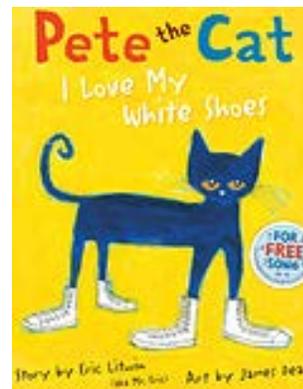
Conference 2014



Speakers

**Thursday Night
Keynote: Eric Litwin**

***Interactive Literacy
and Music***



Get ready to sing, dance and fall in love with interactive literacy and music. Eric Litwin's presentation is fun,

inspirational and practical. He shares simple, interactive songs and stories that teachers and librarians can use the next day. No musical experience is necessary. Eric shows how such traditional techniques as call and response, repetition, and creative movement are applied in literature, music, everyday lessons, classroom management and transitions. With his guitar, harmonica and dynamic singing voice, Eric will have everyone singing, dancing, moving and grooving. Eric will share his #1 *New York Times* best-selling Pete the Cat books as well as his new characters and books. Read about Eric at www.ericlitwin.com.



Friday Morning Keynote: Thomas Armstrong

Thomas Armstrong is the executive director of the American Institute for Learning and Human Development and an award-winning author and speaker who has been an educator for the past 40 years. Over one million copies of his books are in print on issues related to learning and human development. He is the author of 15 books, including *Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Strength-Based Strategies to Help Students with Special Needs Achieve Success in School and Life* and *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom, 3rd Edition*. For more information, go to <http://institute4learning.com/bio.php>.

Friday Evening Performance and Keynote: Greg and Steve



Greg and Steve are a musical group based in Los Angeles, Calif. The duo, composed of Greg Scelsa and Steve Millang, has been performing and recording children's music since the 1970s. Greg and Steve both perform as vocalists and guitarists.

Greg and Steve, who have known each other since high school, moved from their hometown of Newport Beach, Calif, to Los Angeles to "be closer to the music business" in 1968. They took jobs as special education assistants and soon started performing music for children, many of whom had emotional or behavioural problems. They found that their music had a positive effect on children with such disorders as autism. Visit their website at www.gregandsteve.com.

Offsite sessions and program visitation will be hosted at Elmwood School, in Edmonton.

The important thing is to never stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.

—*Albert Einstein*

From the Classroom

Creativity in the Kindergarten Classroom

Education is teetering on the brink of significant change and ready to welcome the unknown as talk of the 21st-century learner and creativity gains momentum. This is unbearably exciting for some educators and frightening for others. There is much conversation on the global stage centring on authentic learning; the notion of creativity, in particular, is gaining momentum in the corporate world and education systems alike. In his book, *Educating for Creativity: A Global Conversation* (2012), Robert Kelly, from the University of Calgary, clearly outlines the need for a shift in educational values toward creating a culture of creativity. He points out that, while we are all creative by nature, mature creative development requires an overt understanding of the process. Kelly (2012) introduces a working vocabulary to highlight seven strands of this development: (1) self-investigative, (2) generative, (3) research/investigative, (4) experimental, (5) analytical, (6) collaborative and (7) creative sustain. When teachers and students understand the vocabulary and the process, creativity can be assessed and placed at the core of the programs. Early childhood educators have an innate understanding of the necessity of creativity in the classroom. The intent of this article is to highlight the journey of our kindergarten team through the lens of one project, while clearly articulating a working plan for the implementation of creativity in any kindergarten classroom. In the specific contexts of our classrooms, introducing a second language and managing social-emotional challenges were important aspects to be addressed. Ensuring that a new language and new skills could flourish, and allowing for individual growth and learning, were essential factors that had to be intrinsic to our programming.

This year, our team decided to embark on a year-long tree inquiry, incorporating most curriculum outcomes under the umbrella of this project. Our goal was to choose a topic that we could revisit all year, incorporating curriculum in a real context. We began by looking closely at trees, with the possibility to morph in different directions depending on the interests and curiosities of the group. The idea of this loose theme keeps us focused, with room to evolve. Early in the autumn, the vocabulary and process of creative development were hidden from the students but very much in the forefront of our planning and intentions as we set the routines and mindsets for the classroom.

To set the stage for a creative disposition, we began with daily nature walks and the observations of trees outside. Authentic experiences in nature increased student engagement, natural curiosity and a common language in the classroom. The goal was to head outside as often as possible, during all types of weather. We chose a tree in our schoolyard to adopt as a class tree. Then the students drew multiple drawings of the tree. These served as several prototypes of an idea. Each drawing allowed the children to build on the last, connecting prior knowledge to new knowledge and challenging mistaken beliefs. We read stories under the tree and looked closely all around, learning how to document our observations, compare and ask questions. Inside the classroom, we explored a divergent/convergent pulse between generative and experimental development. In other words, we would discuss different ideas and then play and create by putting thought to form. We created prototype models of trees, using Plasticine as a medium, while continuing to look closely at the characteristics of trees both outside and in books. The children were

able to express their unique understanding and interpretation of knowledge and gave us a glimpse into where our path would lead.

The next stage was to analyze their work. Collaboratively and individually, we thought about and discussed aspects of the trees that we were satisfied with and aspects that could be improved by adding details or making changes. Review of previous knowledge and work allowed for expanding knowledge and conceptual understanding. As well, the collaborative nature of the process allowed us to support the children's connection of the experience to language. It was important to tell students often that there is no wrong answer and that it is OK and even expected to create multiple prototypes. As a large group, we then generated a list of different materials that we could use to build 3-D trees. Students experimented and played with different mediums and compared this work to their first prototype. This type of exploration and revisiting of previous work allows the children to make connections to prior understandings and to push and revamp their own conceptual schemas expanding their understanding. Our role in the process is to listen, see their understanding, and support and scaffold them through provocative questioning.

The creative process explained above is applicable to any discipline; we have found that it is a very natural way to integrate and personalize learning. Creative development is not a linear process. Set the parameters for a topic and decide the skill competencies that you need to address from the curriculum. Lessons then move between generating ideas as a group, providing the time, tools and/or experts to research and investigate, and experimenting by putting thought to form. Analytical development is modelled throughout the process as teachers demonstrate and give positive and constructive feedback. For further ideas of how to set a theme, think of an open question or idea that can be applied in different directions. Projects can last anywhere from a few weeks to months, depending on the breadth and scope of the skills, knowledge and materials needed to be taught, and the time needed to explore the topic. We have found



In pairs, students created a plan and then built a tree together. (Photo by Stephanie Bartlett)

that students are so naturally engaged in nature and their sense of self and family. It makes sense to pick a topic that easily accesses intrinsic motivation and prior knowledge.

Students experienced their first collaborative activity when we paired them and asked them to draw their plan together for a tree they would build as a team. In conjunction with this plan, they discussed the materials they would need. The following day, before students could begin, they needed to sit with their partner and discuss their plan and materials to decide how to work together, before they could gather materials and create prototypes. The focus and engagement in the room was palpable as students spread themselves out to discuss and create. The untrained eye might look at our shelves and see a jumble of pencil sketches and toilet paper tubes with branches, but we see and remember the process of the activity. The idea of generating ideas and drawing plans before putting thought to form is one that we model and practise consistently



Students sized and inserted branches into the tree trunk. Then they labelled and hung their five personal-interest photos as a real context of fine motor development activity. (Photo by Stephanie Bartlett)

throughout the year. The language and practice begins to filter into play and become natural as we observe students drawing plans in the block centre and discussing possible project plans while chatting at the snack table. Students are learning collaboration, not only through the creative development process guided by the teacher, but in natural interactions with their peers as well.

We no longer plan the school year around themes. We have found that the notion of a big idea like trees is an anchor to which curriculum and creativity can be grounded. We carefully choose the sentence structures, both

oral and written, that we deem essential. Because we are rooted in the vocabulary of trees, it is an excellent way to access prior knowledge about different details concerning colour, line, shape and texture. In our classrooms, we build routines so that students understand and respect classroom materials.

Students arrived one morning to find a real tree trunk with holes. They quickly deduced that it needed branches and spent the day breaking branches to fit in each hole. The result is a four-foot-tall Charlie Brown tree where we keep our pictures for our Je suis unique/I Am Unique project as well as other tree-related projects. As a result of student curiosity related to trees and forests, one tree has a flock of child-created birds inhabiting the branches. The birds are a visual representation of the children's learning and categorization of bird characteristics. The children come to learn that we coexist. When we built our tree and decorated for Halloween and other holidays, this was student-owned: we left the decorations and some tape in the dramatic play centre, and they decorated the centre and our tree with gusto! When teaching the creative process, one requires an excellent knowledge of curriculum so that one can trust the process, further enhancing the idea of building community in the classroom with the idea of outcome unknown. It is important to believe that children are capable and will learn when engaged in and given a voice in their own learning. Because it is the process and the metacognitive skills that are important, the final outcome of specific tasks or themes is less important.

Already this year, we have explored the physical aspects and compared different types of trees. We have talked about seasonal changes and researched birds. When January comes, we will invite students to wonder about who lives in and around trees, as well as the idea of what is a forest. Whatever transpires in each of our classrooms will look very different, as it will depend on the prior knowledge and interests of the students and how they respond to provocations and stimuli, such as video clips, photos and literature. We will start to formally use the vocabulary words of the seven

strands of creative development so that students can begin to recognize the process.

We address specific literacy and math skills and competencies with universal strategies presented and explored together during daily routine activities such as group discussion. This is a fast-moving, predictable routine that encompasses oral language, subitization, number sense, alphabet recognition and sounds, a story to highlight relevant vocabulary, letter formation, and shared/modelled writing that ends with journal writing about three times a week. It is the very essence of this routine that allows us to focus on creative development during the rest of the morning. A high percentage of students will acquire the necessary skills and knowledge through the repetition of these universal strategies, and centre time is an excellent opportunity to apply targeted strategies and differentiate for those who need the extra support.

Routine is not just about making life easier and predictable for all stakeholders; it is an essential component of assessment. The predictability allows those who need extra time and strategies to build their executive function to grow within that structure. Once students have mastered skills, such as alphabet, writing strategies or number sense, they can then transfer their knowledge into their “wonderings” and play around the room. Such representation is always celebrated in a class tour at the end of the day, motivating even more students to explore the following day. The tour involves relocating from the carpet and visiting different areas of the class to share and discuss. This is an interactive discussion that incorporates the vocabulary of creativity. Other times, we will actively practise the language of positive feedback. We have discovered that the very best form of motivation is an idea or spark ignited by a child. Whenever a child ventures into an activity that can be linked to curriculum, we quickly grab the idea, share it with other students and soon we have engagement spreading like wildfire. The trick is to be aware and actively listening as the children play and explore in order to capitalize on these embers and fan them.

It is important to note that this is possible in a French immersion classroom; the pace slows, with emphasis on the use of repetition and visuals. We have made it a goal this year to provide writing materials in each centre, as well as centrally located materials at the writing centre. Student writing is evident in our classrooms: on our walls as they write colours to label displays, on signs at the block centre and in the dramatic play area, in books that they created that stay in our classroom library, and in the messages and letters that students write to family and friends. Before going home, these messages are read and celebrated. This is joyful writing in its truest sense, as it comes from the students’ need and will to communicate.

Assessment and feedback take place every day through conversations, documentation, reflections and the teaching of analytical development. During centre time, we have specific conversations with those who need it. Universally, students bring conversations to us as they explore their learning through play. For example, Madison loves fairies. She created a journal where she began to experiment with drawing fairies. She worked in the research/investigative phase by making a special trip to the library to find books with pictures of fairies so that she could look closely at the different shapes of wings. With the help of a magnifying glass and art materials, she began to create different prototypes. Mme Stephanie assisted her with writing and was able to assess her alphabet recognition and knowledge of letter sounds in a very real context. The action of sharing her work with the class has sparked many other students to create special interest books that we proudly keep in our classroom library.

Kamble’s curiosity about trees has motivated her to write poetry. The spark came from an oral dialogue with Kamble about birds. Together, Kamble and Singbeil identified that the way she was talking sounded poetic and wrote her words verbatim to create her first poem. From that first moment and by revisiting and sharing, many children in the class are now spreading their poetic wings. These two examples demonstrate how we balance

skill development and creative development. We believe that it is the routine teaching of skill competencies that encourage and empower students to deepen their creative development.

Creativity aligns beautifully with the philosophies of Reggio-inspired learning and inquiry. Our classrooms have become living proof that when students are allowed to engage through their own passions and taught the process of creative development, when space is treated as a collaborative tool and when feedback is a collaboration between teacher and students, the evidence of metacognition and student engagement is far-reaching. Seeing the intrinsic motivation of our students as they head straight for our classroom tree or their plans for a personal project has validated and renewed our passion for teaching.

Reference

Kelly, R W. 2012. *Educating for Creativity: A Global Conversation*. Calgary: Brush Education.

Stephanie Bartlett and Deb Singbeil

Stephanie Bartlett and Deb Singbeil teach together at Chinook Park School, in Calgary. They have fused and integrated their learnings from the creativity in educational practice and early childhood education cohorts in the Interdisciplinary Masters in Education program at the University of Calgary. More information, assessment tools and resources about implementing creativity can be found at www.creativitycollective.ca. This is a growing hub and support network for educators interested in pursuing creativity in their teaching practice.

Visit our website at ecec.teachers.ab.ca.

Connect with us on Facebook at Early Childhood Education Council ATA.

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See *Issues, Events & Ideas* online at ecec.teachers.ab.ca.

ECE Bookshelf

Global Books

The ECE Bookshelf introduces titles that beckon young listeners and readers to the magical world of stories, poems and informational texts. The current selection on the shelf focuses on stories and informational texts to help children see themselves as global citizens. Although these books lend support to meeting the Grade 3 provincial social studies curriculum concerning appreciation of similarities and differences among communities, they do more than that. Many introduce the readers in local classrooms to children whose schools and lives bear little resemblance to their own, creating opportunity for recognition of shared human values of respect and care for each other. Students will benefit from having the country of origin pointed out to them on a globe or world map before reading begins and from plentiful opportunity for discussion and comparisons after the last page is read.

A School Like Mine: A Unique Celebration of Schools Around the World, by P Smith and Z Shalev, DK, New York, 2007. This large-format informational picture book introduces readers to children from six continents along with interesting facts about their schooling. Although no text of this sort could be

comprehensive, this one provides sufficient information and visual images for rich opportunities to develop global awareness among readers. It could easily be imagined as a shared text in Grades 3 and 4.

Off to Class: Incredible and Unusual Schools Around the World, by Susan Hughes, Owlkids, Toronto, 2011. Readers are shown a wide array of schools from one that floats, to one in a cave, one in a tree house, one that travels to the students and many more. Underlying the stories of all the incredible variations of schools and schooling is the reminder that, despite these efforts, millions of children are not in school. Hughes contends that knowing about these efforts brings hope and hope can turn into actions. Stories of such action by adults and children are told in such books as *Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa That Brought Them Together*, by H Shoveller, Kids Can Press, Toronto, 2006; *Mimi's Village and How Basic Health Care Transformed It*, by K Milway, Kids Can Press, Toronto, 2012; and *My Name Is Blessing*, by E Walters, Tundra, Toronto, 2013.

First-day-of-school stories from 11 countries are found in *It's Back to School We Go!*, by Ellen Jackson, Millbrook, Minneapolis, 2003. Readers will quickly realize that the first day of



school for young scholars brings mixed emotions to children in many locations. The stories are short: each one introduces a child who tells the story. Each story is illustrated and followed by a few interesting facts about schooling in the country. Caution: some illustrations may not be accurate. For example, Achieng, an eight-year-old, and her classmates, in Kenya, are pictured not wearing school uniforms, a highly unlikely situation.

Rain School, by James Rumford, HMH Books for Young Readers, Boston, 2010, takes readers to the African country of Chad. On the first day of school, anxious young children ask their older siblings questions such as, “Will they give us a notebook?” and “Will I learn to read like you?” When they reach the schoolyard, the teacher greets the children with building materials. Thus begins the nine months of school. First, they build the school, and then they learn to read. This colourfully illustrated story may be somewhat fanciful but is a delightful illustration of what going to school can mean in some places on the African continent.

Beatrice’s Goat, by P McBrier, Aladdin, New York, 2001. This book tells readers how the gift of a goat to her family makes it possible for Beatrice to earn enough money to buy a school uniform and pay school fees, enabling her to go to school. Kari-Lynn Winters tells a similar story of Nassali in *Gift Days*. Markham, Ont: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2012. With family cooperation, Nassali achieves her dreams of not only attending school, but going on to university! These two stories from Uganda further illustrate for Albertan children that schooling, as they know it, is not universal.

Razia’s Ray of Hope, by E Suneby, Kids Can Press, Toronto, 2013. Like Beatrice and Nassali, Razia dreams of going to school in her small village in Afghanistan. When she learns that a school for girls is being built nearby, she is hopeful. But first, she must have permission from the males in her family. Based on the true story of students at Zabuli Education Center for Girls, this beautifully illustrated text tells Razia’s story in a way that will help readers recognize the plight of the millions of children

who do not attend school. Author notes following the story add helpful background.

Sélavi, That Is Life: A Haitian Story of Hope, by Y Landowne, Cinco Puntos, El Paso, Texas, 2004. This book begins with the stories of street children in Haiti, their camaraderie and their survival strategies as they seek out a living from their home under the banyan tree. The story of hope continues as the children are offered refuge, a safe home and schooling, as well as opportunity to reach the airwaves. Based on actual events, muralist and author Landowne has provided readers sensitive insight to the lives of the children. The story is followed by an informational essay by Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat, who explains the history of Haiti in a way easily understood by nine-year-olds.

Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia, by J Winter, Beach Lane Books, San Diego, Calif, 2010, and *Waiting for the Biblioburro*, by M Brown, Tricycle, Berkeley, Calif, 2011. Creating opportunity for learning is not limited to schools and teachers. The last books on the shelf tell the stories of unusual libraries and librarians. Readers will quickly understand that just as schools differ from one part of the world to another, so do libraries. *Biblioburro* and *Waiting for the Biblioburro* tell the true story of how the burros Alfa and Beto carry books to readers in the rural Colombian villages.

My Librarian Is a Camel, by M Ruurs, Boyds Mills, Honesdale, Pa, 2005. Beside the biblioburro stories, this book is an illustrated informational text about the mobile libraries in 13 countries. Readers will be fascinated by the means by which inventive and dedicated librarians make books available from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe—including northern Canada.

Hands Around the Library: Protecting Egypt’s Treasured Books, by K Abouraya, Dial, New York, 2012, and *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq*, by J Winter, HMH Books for Young Readers, Boston, 2004. Finally, two more library stories remind all readers just how valuable libraries and librarians are to learning.

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