

The role of the teacher librarian in learning and literacy

Learning and literacy are at the heart of the role of the teacher librarian. Within the broad field of the library and information sector, the teacher librarian's role is unique in that the teacher librarian is required to be a qualified teacher as well as hold library qualifications. More than this, the teacher librarian is a teacher practitioner responsible for developing learning programs and in particular, responsible for information literacy programs.

Early in this decade there was a national movement within the education field to develop goals about teacher standards, quality and professionalism. As a consequence, many national subject associations devised sets of standards about professional excellence for experienced practitioners. Within this context, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and the Australian School Library Association (ASLA), jointly created *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians (Standards)*.

The *Standards* describe the distinctive professional knowledge, skills and commitment required of excellent teacher librarians. In total there are twelve *Standards* and eight of these refer to learning literacy and information literacy. This document also reflects the values of teacher librarians and aims to ensure that there is a national consensus on what constitutes excellent professional practice. It is intended as a framework for ongoing professional learning and in this way the *Standards* enhance student learning outcomes.

To access a copy of the *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians*, logon onto ALIA Schools website at <http://www.alia.org.au/groups/aliaschools>. Click on the link titled *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians*.

Role of ALIA Schools Group

ALIA Schools group promotes the interests of school libraries and teacher librarians. The group provides opportunities for professional development, lobbies for school libraries with state and local groups, liaises with other groups, identifies and analyses current trends in teacher librarianship, and maintains the profile of teacher librarianship within ALIA.

In planning for professional development sessions that support teacher librarians in their endeavours, ALIA Schools takes into account:

- curriculum initiatives at the local, state and federal level
- participant suggestions
- trends in education and teacher librarianship

In this way the group is providing teacher librarians with the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to meet the *Standards*. Visit the ALIA Schools website to see a summary of professional development seminars <http://www.alia.org.au/education/pd/>

Conclusion

The unique work of the teacher librarian is focused on student learning and literacy. Whether it is program planning, the development of physical space, the creation of a suitable learning environment, collection development or other management strategies, they all revolve around improving student learning outcomes.

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Book Raps: Linking learning, literacy and technology

Teacher librarians around Australia are tuning into the engaging literacy activity 'Book Raps'.

By definition, a book rap is a book discussion involving students from varied parts of Australia (and possibly the world) via email or by using blog software.

Our Stage 1 students (Years 1 and 2) at Thirroul Public School in the Illawarra, participated in the book rap about Mem Fox's book *Wilfrid Gordon MacDonald Partridge* during the early months of this year.

Wilfrid Gordon MacDonald Partridge is a picture book about a small boy living next door to a nursing home and, who befriends the residents and assists his favourite, Miss Nancy, to recall some of her lost memories. Beautifully illustrated by Julie Vivas, it was an ideal choice for a rap.

Run over 4 weeks, students had the opportunity to thoroughly immerse themselves in a book while being able to discuss characters, story ideas and illustrations with hundreds of similarly aged students.

The rap's activities were designed by two teacher librarians who also moderated the blog and encouraged students to probe both the story and illustrations, enabling a richer understanding of the text and heightened visual literacy skills. The rap also tied in perfectly with the 'Families' unit of work which the children were studying in class. Our students especially loved inventing a new character to live at the nursing home, developing the character's physical attributes and hobbies.

For more information on book raps and a list of others to be conducted during the year for both primary and secondary students, visit http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/raps/current_plannedraps.htm

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