Citation

Building an Effective Classroom Library

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New teachers are eager to begin their careers with the information learned from their teacher preparation programs. Too many times, the classroom library is a second thought to the establishment of classroom rules and the implementation of curriculum. Rather than an instructional tool for literacy and classroom community, the library can become a neglected corner of the room without organization. In this practitioner-oriented article, researchers worked with a group of new teachers to help them establish and use their classroom library as part of their literacy program. As a result, tips on building and organizing a classroom library were developed and can be used to guide and support new teachers as they establish their classroom libraries. This article discusses proven strategies and ideas that were developed and tested with classroom teachers.

"You have a hundred dollars to start your classroom library. Do you have a list of books you want to order? No? Okay, here are some catalogs and you can email me your choices."

This comment was typical of the mentors in the Mentoring New Urban Teachers, part of the St. Louis Teacher Enhancement Partnership (STEP), a program to develop and support new teachers for urban schools at the University of Missouri in St. Louis. The response from the new teacher was often a blank look, a shrug of the shoulders and, many times, no response. One teacher spoke up this year and asked, "How DO you know what to pick when you are developing

your classroom library? I don't know where to start." This comment was surprising because the new teacher was a recent graduate of a teacher preparation program. Should she have known the answer to that question?

In theory, yes, new teachers should be able to build their classroom libraries. The importance of the effective use of a well-stocked classroom library is well documented. Research shows that students in classrooms with high-quality classroom libraries read 50 percent more than students who do not have access to a library in the classroom (Booksource, 2003; Hunter, 1999). Well stocked, high-quality classroom libraries can generate interest and motivation for reading, support differentiated instruction through better matching of students with texts, and provide the means to the practice necessary to develop expert reading skills. Unfortunately, many new teachers struggle in practice to build a high-quality collection and effectively utilize a library to meets the needs of all the learners in their classroom. As a result, we aim to provide some guidance on the development, organization, and maintenance of the classroom library that may be of use to teachers-in-training as well as practicing teachers.

The Impetus for the Work

As college faculty and new teacher mentors, we informally surveyed teacher candidates about where they would get the books for their classroom libraries and what kinds of books they would choose. Although the answers were varied, most of the teacher candidates were able to note several thrifty ways of picking up books for their classrooms (e.g., yard sales, dollar stores, library sales, and gifts). However, a question about how they knew *which* books to select did not generate as many responses. Some said they had favorites that they already purchased to include in their libraries. A few mentioned trying to build text-sets of books to go along with a theme or unit they knew they would be teaching in their classrooms. In general, however, they did not seem to have in mind a way to begin to build their library or any clear goals for the types of books they might select or how they might use them to supplement instruction. Some even commented that they would not let the students use some of the books they had because they were only for teacher use at read-aloud time.

We decided to ask these prospective teachers to take a closer look at the classroom libraries of the teachers with whom they were completing their final field assignments. Teacher candidates had completed courses in children's literature and literacy methods and were trained by their internship supervisor on how to use a simple rating checklist. Eleven teacher candidates working in two schools were asked to rate their cooperating teachers' classroom libraries as excellent, adequate, or not adequate along a variety of dimensions (see Table 1 for results). Most reported back that although the classroom libraries generally included an adequate range of texts of a variety of types, genres, and reading levels, the majority of libraries were not well organized, did not identify themes or topics, and were not leveled to meet the needs of students with a variety of reading abilities. In two cases, a designated classroom library did not exist. With the exception of one classroom, none of the rooms had formal check out systems for the classroom library books.

Moreover, almost everyone noted that while students could pick a book for "free time" or whenever they had completed their assigned work early, there was no real connection between the books in the library and regular classroom instruction. While some teachers displayed books that complimented a current theme of study, teacher candidates noted that it seemed difficult for many teachers to utilize these texts given the demands of their basal curricula on their time. It

seems that although teachers know they should *have* a classroom library and have dedicated space to their collections, use of the books was not woven into the life of the classroom in most cases. After more discussion with this group of teacher candidates, it became apparent that these new teachers needed help thinking about developing, managing, and using their classroom library collections.

Table 1
Evaluating the Classroom Library: Results from Teacher Candidates' Observations

Criteria	Excellent Representation		Adequate Representation		Not Adequate or Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Classroom library is clearly designated in the room	7	64	2	18	2	18
There are many books included in the library	6	55	4	36	1	9
A variety of genres are included (e.g., realistic fiction, historical fiction, poetry, information, biography)	6	55	4	36	1	9
Texts are labeled or grouped by genre	3	27	1	9	7	64
Texts are labeled or grouped according to reading level	1	9	4	36	6	55
Texts are labeled or grouped for various purposes (guided reading, read aloud, etc.)	0	0	2	18	9	82
Library includes both picture books and chapter books	7	64	1	9	3	27
The library includes books appropriate for children reading at, above, or below grade level	5	45	4	36	2	18
There is an organized check-out system for children	0	0	1	9	10	91

Getting Started: Building Your Collection

Planning the classroom library always starts with considering how to access books and how many to include. Most teacher candidates start collecting books for their classroom libraries long before they finish their teacher preparation programs. However, it is not always clear how many books they need or what kinds of books they should be seeking.

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) stress the importance of building a varied collection so students can develop their reading skills as well as expand their worlds. Classroom libraries should include a variety of texts of various formats, genres, and types, including texts that can be applied to study in a range of content areas. Narrative and expository texts on a range of topics should be plentiful, and environmental print should be included in order to appeal to a range of interests and to expose students to different text formats and types of print. Availability of selections for students reading at, above, or below grade level is critical, including many books easy enough for students to "sail through" independently (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p.518).

There are many publishers and booksellers that provide teachers with searchable databases of books available for purchase. Yet, in addition to locating good sources that provide direction for collecting children's books, teachers should be discriminating consumers of high-quality selections. There are a number of factors that help define the general "quality" of a children's book, including the quality of its cover, characters, plot, theme, language, and illustrations. Numerous guidelines for selecting high-quality children's literature are available to teachers for this purpose (e.g., Cullinan & Galda, 1994; Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 1997; Norton, 2003; Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 1996). Along with many national award programs, the America Library Association (ALA) book awards, including the Caldecott, Newberry, and Pura Belpré medals, and the Coretta Scott King and Theodor Seuss Geisel Awards, also provide teachers with recommended selections that are considered some of the best available each year.

Figure 1. Sources for high quality children's literature.

Sites to assist in selecting high quality children's literature
Across the Globe Learning Resources, www.acrosstheglobelr.com
ALA Award Winners (Newberry, Caldecott, Coretta Scott King Award, Geisel Award, Pura Belpre Medal, Siebert Medal, etc.),
http://www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants/booksprintmedia/childrenyngadults/index.cfm
American Library Association Booklist Online, www.booklistonline.com
Children's Book Press, www.childrensbookpress.org
Cooperative Children's Book Center, www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc
Follett, www.titlewave.com
International Children's Book Awards, http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dKbrown/awards.html
Kids Like Us, www.kidslikeus.org
Lee and Low Books, www.leeandlow.com
Lectorum, www.lectorum.com
Scholastic, www.scholastic.com

Sites to help level the library
www.lexile.com
www.acceleratedreader.com

In addition to being selective about the general quality of texts, finding books that are culturally relevant to the lives of students in the classroom is an important factor in building a library that is reassuring and motivating for beginning readers. Including texts with characters similar in age to students in the classroom who share experiences they have had can be critical for generating interest and fostering self-to-text connections. Cultural and linguistic familiarity may be an especially important factor for literacy acquisition for English language learners (Vardell, Hardaway, & Young, 2006). Unfortunately, teachers may have difficulty finding books that reflect the experiences of children in their classroom if they are not aware of resources available for that purpose (See Figure 1). In addition, teachers may need guidance in identifying high quality multicultural children's literature that avoids racism and stereotypes, particularly if they are not from the same cultural or socioeconomic background as the students they teach. A number of researchers (Boutte, 2002; Fleming, Jordan, Reynolds, & Smith, 2007; Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001; Higgins, 2002; Sims Bishop, 1991; Yakota, 1993) in multicultural children's literature have developed guidelines for supporting these selections.

Still, some researchers have noted a limited availability of children's literature including characters from certain cultural backgrounds and communities, such as texts with Native American or Latino/a characters (Higgins, 2002) or books with positive images of urban settings (Fleming et al., 2007). When a range of high-quality selections are challenging to find or purchase, it may be important to display books made by the class that include familiar family and community stories. A way to build the library is to publish these class-generated books through a website such as www.Lulu.com for minimal costs.

Students should have access to texts in which they see themselves and their experiences represented and valued, as well as texts that represent a diversity of characters, settings, and stories reflective of our broader society. A self-evaluation checklist (Figure 2) is provided to help teachers assess the range of texts in their classroom libraries. Figure 3 includes a list of sources for finding books generated by classroom teachers and teacher educators that expands beyond the usual bookstore or online bookseller.

One rule of thumb on how many books to include is to plan for a minimum of 10 books for every child in the classroom, with no less than 100 books (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, & Teale, 1993; Reutzel & Fawson, 2002). Allington and Cunningham (2001) suggest 700-750 books for primary-grade classrooms. Miller (2002) advocates being choosy and building the library collection gradually. Purchasing every outdated and dog-eared paperback from your local yard sale is not going to help children get excited about the books in the library. Students should be reading high quality children's literature that is "likely to prompt thinking and discussion, have believable, compelling characters who talk the way real people talk, do things real people do, and deal with real childhood issues" (Miller, 2002, p. 47). We recommend that teachers gradually work towards these recommended quantity goals since it is more important to have high-quality books than to simply have a great number of books.

Organizing the Classroom Library

The message from a well-organized, labeled classroom library is that reading is a valued part of the curriculum (Bickert, 1999). Regardless of the size of the classroom or condition of the environment, decoration and organization can make all the difference. Brassell (2005) notes that donated pillows, cutout decorations that are aesthetically pleasing and perhaps hanging from the ceiling, and recycled throw rugs can make a warm, inviting place for students to gather to
Figure 2. Self-evaluation checklist.

Physical Environment	Solid	Needs Work
Clearly designated library space in the room		
Space for 3-4 students		
Enough shelves or containers for my books		
Comfortable space with soft items (rug, comfortable seating)		
Display area for recently read aloud books		
Display area for 'teacher recommended' books		
Display area for 'student recommended' books		
Easy access to books		
Significant number of books displayed with covers forward		
Journal, log or method for tracking text selection/providing feedback		
Chart or place for student comments, voting on or rating books, etc.		
Additional literacy "tools" (bookmarks, post-its, review clipboards, etc.)		
Content of the Collection:	**Solid**	**Needs Work**
An adequate number of books (at least 10 books per student)		
Many <u>high-quality</u> books (appealing, quality content, good condition)		
A range of text formats (big books, picture books, short chapter books, chapter books) appropriate for my grade level		
A good mix of narrative, expository, and environmental text		
A variety of genres (realistic fiction, historical fiction, poetry, information, biography, etc.)		
Books appropriate for students reading at, above, or below grade level		
Many texts with characters that are about the same age as my students		
Many texts that are relevant to my students' cultural backgrounds and communities		
Many texts that can be used to support content area instruction (math, science, social studies)		
Enough texts appropriate for read alouds, book talks, literature circle sets, etc.		
Organization:	**Solid**	**Needs Work**

Clear system for organizing the books is in place		
Texts are labeled or grouped by format, genre, level or topic		
All shelves or containers are labeled with the system		
Labels are developmentally appropriate (readable labels, clip art or color-code with labels, etc.)		
Students know the system of organization and are able to use it effectively		
Students can find books at their "just right" level quickly and easily		
<u>Management:</u>	**Solid**	**Needs Work**
A plan for rotating books in and out of the library is in place		
An organized book check-out system in place		
The check-out system is working effectively		
Students have most of the responsibilities to manage the check-out system		
The system allows me to monitor students' selections (e.g., check out binder, reading logs)		
All aspects of the library allow children to be self-sufficient		
I am able to schedule regular times for read alouds and book talks		
My students have independent reading time regularly		
I am able to provide regular opportunities for students to share what they are reading independently		

explore books. An area in the classroom can be defined with movable shelving or with milk cartons retrieved from the school cafeteria. The area should create a place in the classroom that invites individual relaxation or opportunities for interaction among a small group of three to four students. Soft seating areas can be created with crib mattresses covered by colorful fabric, beanbag chairs, or floor pillows.

A simple turn-taking system (clothespins with students' names on a schedule, for example) can be used so all students get to enjoy a comfortable, relaxed read during the week if they choose (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Use the top of shelves or the wall surrounding the area to highlight books that support the curriculum and to display students' work samples that are a result of investigation within the curriculum, such as artwork or books written by students (Bickert, 1999). Diller (2005) suggests additional components (e.g., soft lighting, music, puppets, clipboards, and pencils) for teachers to consider as resources become available that may enhance the atmosphere and utility of the classroom library.

Figure 3. Places to find books and resources for your classroom library.

Yard sales
Library book sales
Retiring teachers/teachers switching grade levels
Friends and relatives with children who have outgrown certain books
Neighborhood organizations
Church/community groups
Dollar Stores
Thrift stores
Ask for children's books as gifts – make a wish list for friend and family
Web Resources:
> E-bay
> Craigslist
> PaperbackSwap.com
> BookCloseouts.com

Small grants:
> donorschoose.org

Book club bonus points
Office supply closeouts
Card shop displays, spiral bookracks
Carpet store remnants/old samples, carpet squares
Nearby office buildings for bookshelves and other furniture they may be discarding

Organizing the books within the classroom library should allow for a large number of books to be displayed with their covers visible for easy selection. Face as many books forward as possible for ease of viewing. If a book does not have an inviting cover but offers colorful illustrations and/or a great story, display it with the cover open in a manner that will entice students to explore the book. A special display section should be set aside for the books most recently read aloud by the teacher so students can explore the book on their own, securing their understanding of the sequence of the story, and supporting their connection between the illustrations and their understanding of the story. Another special display could be 'teacher recommended' and 'student recommended' books so readers share their favorites with others.

Every few weeks some books should be rotated (McGee & Richgels, 2003). Always leave some favorites in the library and add new books that represent the current topic of the curriculum. Also, include books that represent future topics in the curriculum so that students will start to form ideas about what they will learn and so they can offer what they already know about the topic as they begin a new project or theme. When rotating the books, add new books gradually, putting back favorites if students protest. One way to judge what students are interested in having available in the library is to have a chart that asks students to vote on new books that are added. Another way to manage how the library is used is to have students note what books they explored in individual reading journals they keep in the library area.

Books can be grouped in various ways, depending on the developmental level of the students in the classroom. In a preschool classroom, where book exploration is the overall goal, grouping books by topics (bugs, animals, and families) might be the best way to display texts. In

primary grade classrooms, teachers may begin to introduce the concept of genre, creating separate bins for realistic fiction, fantasy, fairy tales, poetry, or informational texts (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 1997). Easy-to-read labels with pictures or icons providing clues to the topic or genre will help students navigate the collection.

By second grade, when students are working on reading fluency, a combination of topic groupings and reading-level groupings help students in selecting "just right" materials. When leveling books, many teachers use standard number or lettering systems. Still, even simple eyeball sorting methods (at, below, above grade level) may do the trick in helping students select appropriate texts. Mark books with colored stickers within genre or topic bins categories to indicate relative level of difficulty, and use student-friendly, non-stigmatizing labels to refer to different levels (everyday, just right, challenge; cool, warm, hot; dessert, main meal, extra helping, etc.) (Diller, 2003; Reutzel & Fawson, 2002).

Be sure to mark every book in the same place (e.g., upper right hand corner) so students know quickly where to look to find the tags. Some teachers like to write on the stickers to create subcategories or to indicate topic or genre and level. For example, red stickers may indicate fiction, and a red sticker with an "H" is historical fiction. If you want to level books within categories and the school uses a leveling system, the level number/point value can be written on the dots. Otherwise, marking books in relation to an informal leveling system (cool "C", warm "W", hot "H") should suffice. Clear shipping tape can be used to cover the labels and keep the dots from popping off. Regardless of the organizational goals of the classroom library, the key is to inform the students how the books are displayed and why.

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) stress the importance of both ownership and independence in establishing an effective classroom library. Students should be involved regularly in helping organize the space and materials, monitoring effectiveness, and troubleshooting problems. The library should be organized for optimum independence. During independent reading, the teacher wants to be free for guided reading or conferencing, so students need to know how to use the library on their own, being able to find materials they need efficiently, and being able to put them away when finished. Keep in mind that organization should teach students "how to think about books" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Organizing by topic, genre, theme, author, series, and special features (e.g., awards, class favorites, books they have read aloud) will facilitate this thinking.

Using the Classroom Library

Opening the Library

When the library is organized, established to complement the curriculum, and inviting to students in the classroom, it is time to open the library and invite students to explore. As with all the areas of the classroom, rules for use of the library need to be established and are likely to be remembered if the students help develop the rules. Posting simple guidelines for using the library, along with a map of how the library is organized (Reutzel & Fawson, 2002), will help promote independent use and maintenance of the library.

Caltha Crowe (2006), a third grade teacher, recommends not opening the classroom library until the second week of school to build excitement and interest. She also invites the students to explore the library through the book bins she has arranged. First, they explore the bins as a class and then in small groups. She asks students to describe what they notice, including how well-cared-for the books are. Other observations about the books and their topics help

students who have not had much experience looking at books understand the process of engaging with books. The process of making observations and sharing them sets a tone for using the library and discussing the books with others.

Diller (2005) recommends having students participate in book sorting activities during the first weeks of school. Start with simple sorts (fiction and nonfiction), and then move to sorting by more fine-grained categories related to topics (e.g., weather and dinosaurs) or genre (e.g., historical fiction, biography, and poetry), depending on the grade level. Students who are not secure in their reading skills might develop self-confidence by helping to identify categories of interest and providing recommendations for adding to the collection (Hunter, 1999).

Check Out and Return

One of the most difficult things for teachers to establish in their classroom library is the checking out and returning of books. Two issues most frequently noted when discussing check-out with teachers are how to manage it and whether to trust students to bring the books back. Organizing a check-out system has to be easy to manage and should rely on the students to do as much of the work as possible. Adding pockets, printing cards, and reshelving books can overwhelm the amount of time a teacher spends making the classroom library available to the students. Kim's Korner, a website for teacher ideas, suggests having a page for each student in a classroom library check-out journal, rather than individual cards and pockets in the back of the books (www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com). Using a page for each student allows the student to copy the title and enter the date he or she is checking out the book. Teachers may also have students indicate the topic or genre of the selection. Then students can note when the book is returned. Other teachers prefer a bulletin board display with card holders for each student. Each time students select a book, they write the name and author on an index card and place it in their check out folder. For in-class, independent reading, students' desks or tables might be stocked with book bins or seat sleeves in which they can keep four to five selections per week. Each day, a different table or small group of students can rotate going to library for new choices.

For emergent readers and writers exploring books in the library, some teachers recommend having students decorate clothespins or wooden paint stirrers donated from a home improvement store with their name and personalized design. When books are selected from the library, the student simply placed the paint stirrer in the spot from which the book was taken. When it comes time for reshelving, students can simply find their marker and place the book back in its designated spot.

Reshelving

Reshelving books can be another time-consuming task for the teacher. We highly recommend engaging students in the responsibility for reshelving books, whether they are used within the classroom or checked out to go home. As discussed previously, labeling or color coding the books and teaching students the system of organization will allow them to become partners in maintaining the organization and care of the library. When organizing by topic for young students, get bins of different colors and then match those colors to stickers adhered to the spine of the books that belong in that bin or area of the shelf. If milk crates are used and cannot be color-coded, hang a tag, with a specific color on it, from the carton. Another option is to line sections of shelves with construction paper or colored contact paper. These types of color-coded organizational systems will help younger students to take on the responsibility for managing the classroom library. Coding systems for older students might involve genre and reading-level labeling.

Rather than have individual students reshelving books on a daily basis, some teachers prefer having a designated "returns" bin, similar to the library or video store. After signing books back into a check-out log, the students can simply place the book into a separate return bin. When students have become familiar with the system, they can take turns to help with reshelving, which should further reinforce their understanding of how the books are organized and categorized.

Regardless of the method chosen, thoroughly teaching the system of organization, practicing selections, and reshelving texts are all crucial to the development of the classroom library. Ensuring all students have a high degree of familiarity with finding where different kinds of books are located, matching stickers and icons, and placing books face forward and right side up will allow the students to be self-sufficient while maintaining the organization of the collection.

Using the classroom library as a tool for instruction includes providing jobs for reshelvers, bin checkers, and book reviewers that can be rotated among students and will help reduce the time required for the teacher to spend on the managing the classroom library. Another important student job is that of the book doctor. This person must identify and help repair texts with torn pages, cracked bindings, or missing labels. In addition to assigning jobs, Diller (2003) recommends having students report back to the group, noting any problems with organization or book care they notice and brainstorming remedies. As students assume different roles, they may not only become self-sufficient at selecting and managing books, but they may also build a sense of classroom community as and develop a sense of ownership of the library.

Getting the books back is a challenge that teachers continue to debate. Encouraging students to read requires them to have access to books, and many students do not have age-appropriate books in their homes. However, some teachers worry that books that go home may not come back. It is our belief that beginning readers must have access to books from school that can be taken home for daily independent reading. In our experience, students are more likely to read for pleasure when their interest in reading is fostered regularly with texts that pique their curiosity, value their experiences, and expand their worlds. It is reasonable to have the classroom library populated with a variety of books that include books that can be checked-out, books for read-aloud, and books for classroom use only. For the most popular class titles, teachers might consider keeping multiple copies so selections are available to be used in class and can go home. Figure 1 provides some resource ideas for gathering a variety of inexpensive or free books that can be checked-out for home use. Teachers should keep books for check-out on their classroom wish-list so they can always be replaced if necessary.

Integrating the Library with Literacy Instruction

Contrary to the results of our initial survey, using the library for literacy instruction must involve much more than simply giving students "free time" to read. Miller (2002) notes the importance of conducting mini-lessons on book selection early on to actively guide students' selection of "just right" texts for independent reading. Teaching strategies such as considering what one knows about a topic, looking at size of print and number of words and lines on a page, noticing if the cover and/or pictures help to tell the story, noting whether one can read most words, and testing the first page with the "five finger rule" will help students expand their repertoire of strategies for text selection beyond that a book simply "looks good." Miller also recommends having students gauge their mood and motivation level for the day (e.g., in the

mood to try hard to read a new challenging book or feeling like an easy read right now). Posted reminders (e.g., "How to choose a book" chart) can help students maintain some independence and still choose appropriately leveled texts for independent reading (Diller 2003).

Students should be asked to keep simple records of their selections and to reflect periodically on what they are reading, perhaps via reading notebooks or occasional book reviews. As an instructional tool, teachers can review reading logs with students as part of individual conferencing in order to assess the range of topics or genres selected and to help the teacher monitor the students' selection of just right texts. Teachers might also use this time to recommend additional selections that could be of interest to students. Although many teachers enjoy silently reading with students during independent reading time, Fountas and Pinnell (2001) recommend taking advantage of this instructional time for independent conferencing, guided reading, and small group literature study. Students will come to understand a teacher's love of books through read-alouds, book talks, and mini-lessons. Teachers should use independent reading time as an opportunity for some quality small group instruction.

In order to capitalize on their own growing love of books and progress in reading, students should be provided with many opportunities to discuss what they are reading in small or large groups, or even with a reading buddy. Sharing which books they are selecting as well as *why* they chose those texts can be important for generating interest among the group and for reminding students about the process involved in selecting texts. Reflecting on what they learned during independent reading, discussing how strategies covered in the mini-lesson were used, or reflecting on how well the group is working together during independent reading time is also important.

Students might be encouraged to offer their "picks of the week" or to construct library displays around their "top ten" favorites. They can also take turns sharing a good book with the class in a format for recommended reading. Students take turns as guest book reviewers, summarizing the book for their classmates and then displaying the book on a special place designated for recommended selections similar to what is found in many retail book stores. Another use of the classroom library is to extend it into mathematics instruction by having the class create graphs to represent most popular selections in the library, or chart numbers of texts in the collection by favorite author or illustrators.

"Book breaks" (Hunter, 1999) are a further instructional approach that might be used to create a buzz and continue to generate interest in the classroom library. These "surprise" breaks come at unexpected times during the week and are designed to have the teacher or a student read an exciting section of a book they have chosen. Special "mystery" guests, such as parents, other teachers, or the principal, might also be invited to visit for a book break, in order to foster interest and generate shared anticipation.

Maintenance and Troubleshooting

Despite the care a teacher may take in organizing the library, teaching the check in and check out system, and monitoring student use, difficulties can always arise. Diller (2003) recommends taking informal anecdotal notes on two or three students per day to monitor a student's ability to make good selections, read for understanding, care for materials, respond to literature through discussion or reviews, and make recommendations. Similarly, Miller (2002) recommends keeping a notebook about each child, so notes from anecdotal observations and conferencing can be periodically reviewed and used to determine individual or small group

instructional needs. As with maintaining any skill, regular practice makes perfect. Be sure to teach, review, and reteach the organization system, strategies for text selection, and the procedure for reshelving at various points throughout the year. Posting strategy charts, "I can" statements, or "When in doubt…" charts may also help students generate solutions when they get stuck around selections. These charts may remind students: *I can choose a favorite book I've read before, I can choose a read aloud, I can ask a buddy for a recommendation, I can pick a book on the topic we're studying, I can choose a favorite author* (Diller 2003).

While teacher preparation programs generally expose teacher candidates to a wide range of children's literature in education coursework, beginning teachers would certainly benefit from more practical, "how-to" instruction and practice in setting up, managing, and maintaining a classroom collection and integrating the use of trade books with the core reading curriculum. Providing children with the necessary tools and strategies for using the library, selecting texts, sharing what they read, and monitoring their reading progress will go a long way in making the classroom library an effective instructional tool and promoting students' reading development.

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