

LIBRARIAN AS TEACHER: LESSONS TO USE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Rachel K. Glasser and Susan Berman

Description: The session will present several self-contained lessons for use in elementary day schools. Topics will include literature studies, holiday lessons, Internet searches, and more. The topics will be presented by experienced librarians from many types of schools and will include handouts.

Rachel Glasser will focus on Library Skills, Reference, Reading, and Folklore.

Susan Berman will focus on Enhancing Current Curriculum with Technology.

Focus: Library Skills, Reference, Reading, and Folklore

Rachel K. Glasser

Rachel Glasser is the Librarian at Yavneh Academy Day School in Paramus, NJ, an Orthodox day school of 800 students grades pre-K to 8. She is the Coordinator of the Sydney Taylor Manuscript Committee and a member of the Accreditation Committee. She is a past president of AJLSC (Southern California) and founding cataloger of the Central Cataloguing System for Libraries of Judaica, and a member of the AJL chapters in New Jersey and New York. Ms. Glasser assisted in the revisions of the Elazar Classification System and the Weine Cataloging Schemes.

This will be a presentation on the Librarian as teacher using successful ideas and programs, which I have used and implemented in my elementary school of grades Pre-K to 8 with 800 students. Our library curriculum is still a work-in-progress, since there was not one in place when I was hired. One of the things that all of us as school librarians share is that there is never enough time to do everything you need to do. A school librarian is expected to be accomplished in reference, cataloging, technical services, internet searching, media

services, curriculum, and teaching as well as the ordinary, yet necessary tasks of covering books, shelving, ordering, and a variety other jobs. In many schools, we have become a “jack of all trades.” I am extremely fortunate in that next year I will have a full-time assistant, but I realize that many of you are working completely alone. Our library services 27 classes very week for ½ hour periods, and next year that will increase to 29. That doesn’t leave a lot of time for everything else.

I try to use the library as an outreach tool to instill a love of reading and literature in our students as well as a curiosity for information, on any topic that might interest them. I structure the year around several basic areas and include special projects for certain grades as well as some competitions and ongoing projects. These areas include: library skills, reference, reading, and folklore. I use games, worksheets, and computer presentations to teach library and reference skills appropriate to the grade level. This is usually done throughout the year as various intervals so as to keep the students’ interest and keep the skills progressing. I use folklore for several reasons. First, it is a love of mine and I truly enjoy exploring the folklore of many countries and cultures. I find that it helps to keep the kids focused on a story while trying to teach them other skills as

well as work on characterization, plot development, and history. We have an extensive collection of folktales from many lands as well as many Jewish and Hasidic tales.

One project that the library sponsors each year is the Fourth Grade Storytelling Festival which has evolved from an elite group of students being chosen to present folktales to the rest of the school to a day festival involving every fourth grader. We received a grant from the New Jersey Arts Council several years ago, which pays for a professional storyteller to come into our school and teach our fourth graders how to become storytellers. We have chosen fourth grade because they are old enough to appreciate the stories and the methodology by which one can learn the stories. She presents five one-hour workshops on consecutive weeks in each fourth grade class. Following the first session, the library staff helps the students choose a short folktale, which they will work on for the next several weeks. She entertains them by telling two stories each week and then proceeds to teach them how to learn the stories through techniques that include story mapping, character and plot analysis, and special exercises. Each fourth grade teacher participates in the workshops so they can help with the follow-up during the week. The library staff assists as well. The students become so familiar and comfortable with their stories that they memorize them without even realizing it. The festival culminates in a Storytelling Day during which three or four fourth graders go into each classroom of Pre-K through the Fifth grades and present their stories. Everything stops in the school for that designated time and everyone enjoys the stories. All fourth graders dress in a similar manner, and we give each of them a festival ribbon to wear, which they can then keep as a memento. The library staff coordinates the presentations with the general studies staff, and when the kids have finished their stories, they all return to the library for a half hour of refreshments and relaxing after a job well done. Of course, not every storyteller is fabulous, but the entire grade is enthusiastic and focused on one goal, and the results are exciting.

Another important part of the library curriculum is poetry. Our library coordinates the Poetry Contest for the local library, which is open to grades 1-8 during National Poetry Month. We begin a month before and do an extensive unit on poetry in our classes including explanations on various types of poetry, ideas for poems, special types of poems, and how to enter a contest. We read many types of poetry to the students and work with the English teachers to insure that the students follow the contest rules, and we collect all entries. Our school typically submits over 225 poems and has numerous winners each year. Our local library even provides kosher refreshments at the awards evening since our day school is such a large participant in this event.

For the past five years, we have created a Library Newsletter in June, which is sent to all families in the school. We include articles on special library events of the past year, reprinted articles on children's literature and items of parental interest such as summer activities, fun websites for kids, informative websites for parents, and summer reading lists by age level. We also include a brightly colored bookmark, which we have designed for the students to write down at least five books that they have read over the summer. If they return it to the library during the first month of school in the fall, then

they receive a small prize. We post them on a bulletin board in the library, and during the first week of classes the kids share some of the titles that they have read and their opinion of them. It's great fun and a good incentive for summer reading.

One of the problems I encountered when I first came to Yavneh was that not enough of our students used the library. My supervisor, the Assistant Principal for General Studies, believed that every student in our classes should be required to take out a book every week. While this may be a lofty goal, it does not really work easily. I developed a program, the Library Curriculum Chart, for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders to encourage and require usage of the library along with an incentive program. All students in those grades must read 14 books of certain genres throughout the year. They include biography, non-fiction, folklore, poetry, mystery, award-winning fiction, fantasy, general fiction, and two books of Jewish content. The students can choose any age-appropriate titles within these categories. A chart is kept with the names of each student in the class, and the kids can check the chart at any time during their library period. When they return their books at the beginning of the class, the books they have read are entered on the chart according to their barcode number. In this way, we can look up particular books if a student needs to refer back to it. They can use a book that has been assigned by a teacher for a book report or project, as long as it fits into one of our categories. The only rule is that the books must be taken out of the Yavneh Library. There really is not a way to be absolutely certain that the kids read the books, although most do. I ask them where on the chart it belongs, and if they have no clue what type of book it is, I can usually tell that they haven't read it. Most kids are quite honest and will tell me themselves if they didn't like the book and never read it or never finished it. When the Curriculum Chart is introduced, I use it to teach the various genres as well as how the collection is arranged and where items are located. The purpose of the program is to encourage the students to utilize the entire library and read books that they might not pick up on their own. I do have parents who occasionally call me and say that they take their children to the public library and that those books should count for our curriculum. However, I have been very strict about it and explain to them that this is part of the school general studies curriculum. We do use some incentives for the students. Our school uses a point system of Nekudot to reward students. The points can be used toward the purchase of books at the two book fairs or at the after-school canteen. After they complete the first five books on the chart, they receive a 25-point card, after the next five books, they get an additional 25 points, and after completion of the chart, the student gets 50 more points. In the past, we have given a pizza lunch party to the class, which finishes the entire chart first, with the second and third place winners getting a fun dessert. I am thinking of discontinuing the party and giving the kids a certificate after completion. I have found that the students will encourage and help each other find books appropriate for the chart, especially after someone has read something new and really exciting. It has been a good program, and I am very happy with the results. It's a good way to help the kids move along in their reading without being afraid to try something new.

Our "Book of the Lunch" Clubs have developed over the past two years with the cooperation and assistance of the school social worker. She was looking for a way to

develop some social skills in certain students in a subtle and effective manner. After some brainstorming sessions, we came up with the idea of books clubs. The first year was by invitation only for two separate clubs for 4th and 5th graders. We chose a book, which would spark good discussions of social issues and arranged for the students to read it. Once a month, the students would come to the library at the beginning of the lunch and recess period, a total of about 40 minutes, and we would eat and discuss the book in an informal, non-threatening setting. A library staff member, who introduced the themes, characters, and setting and the social worker, who highlighted the social issues and personal connections, led the discussions. Occasionally students who show up who admitted to not having read the book, and we were rather lenient with allowing them to attend anyway. I think I would be a bit stricter next year in order to develop the sense of responsibility of being part of a group as well as being able to fully participate in the discussions. It is a lot of fun to lead these book clubs since the kids are very relaxed and usually quite honest and open in their comments. The social worker was pleased with the results as well. The next year, after pressure from parents who had heard about the book clubs, we opened it up to any students in the two grades. The results were not as good since students did not feel the same responsibility to attend or read the books. The groups became too large at times, and too small at others. Although we tried to do a book every month or six weeks, it was very difficult due to the school schedule. Our goal for next year is to have five book clubs per grade per year. At the end of the year, we invited an author (either a parent or a connection through a parent) to come to the final meeting to speak the combined clubs.

Our Birthday Club, whose idea I adapted from the program at Sinai Temple Library in Los Angeles, California has been a huge success in terms of fundraising as well as public relations for the library. We obtain a list of all students in the school according to the month of their birthdays. About two weeks prior to the beginning of the month, a form letter with the student's name filled in is sent to the parents wishing them a mazel tov on the upcoming birthday. We suggest a donation of \$18 to be sent to the library in honor of the student. A personalized bookplate, which we make on the computer, is placed in an age-appropriate new book, which is then presented to the student at his/her library class. The student is the first to check out that book from our library, and it is then placed in the general collection. In the younger classes, we often read the books out loud. It's been a wonderful publicity tool for our library. We have raised over \$4000 each year since the program began. I wasn't sure if it would hold its own after the first year or two, but it is still very popular. One of the questions always asked at the beginning of the library period is: Are there any Birthday Books this week? The kids love to open books in the collection and see their friends' or siblings' names in them from past years. It helps to make the children feel that the library and collection belongs to them! It is a voluntary program; however, and sometimes a child will be upset if his/her parent does not send in the money. We explain that all the books in the library belong to everyone in the school, and maybe next year their family will participate, or perhaps the children can save for a book by themselves.

I use the weekly Faculty Bulletin to alert staff to new acquisitions in the library as well as to highlight special part of the collection such as our Cookbook Collection. We

currently have over 50 kosher and healthy cookbooks. This started through a faculty member request and quickly grew into a large collection, which has served as a great outreach tool. Often times, a teacher will come in to borrow a cookbook and then ask about other library materials. We placed it strategically near the Teachers' Center in order to maximize visibility.

The library sponsors an Author Day each year with the cooperation and funds of the Yavneh Parent Association. In the past few years we have had Elaine Greenstein, Douglas Florian, Bernard Waber, Dan Gutman, and others. Next year, we will host David Adler. Sometimes we will have two authors, depending on their target audience. We coordinate the schedule and any book sales. Last year, we sponsored a contest for the fifth grade. The students had to write, in 100 words or less, why they would like to have lunch with an author. With the help for the 5th grade teachers, we chose 5 winners to join our guest author for lunch in the library. The kids had a great time and loved having a real author all to himself or herself.

There is never enough time in a school day to accomplish everything. Aside from the weekly classes and special events, there are always the teachers and administrators who call on us for quick research and need the answers yesterday. I would love to be able to send a notice to specific teachers when materials come in which would be helpful to their curriculum. I used to attend some of the grade meetings to be apprised of the curriculum for the month and special needs of the teachers. Our school is just too large now. At the beginning of the year, I encourage the teachers to let us know a few weeks before starting special curricula units so that we can be prepared to appropriate materials and gear our library classes in support of their needs. Some teachers are very interested and thrilled for the help and support, while others will throw a topic as you as they drop off their class at the door to the library. I feel that the librarian can never stop trying to support and enhance the curriculum in any way possible. As frustrating as it may be at times, there is a great deal of excitement and satisfaction working in an elementary school library. I really love it!!

Focus: Enhancing Current Curriculum with Technology

Susan Berman

Susan F. Berman, holds a B.A. in History/Education from S.U.N.Y. Stony Brook 1973, M.L.S. from University of Maryland at College Park 1974, and a graduate certificate in Management from University of Baltimore 1980. She worked as a young adult public librarian at Enoch Pratt Free Library 5 Years, in Baltimore Public elementary schools 5 years, with troubled youth at Good Shepherd Center, residential treatment 6 years. Susan has been Director of Library Services at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation since 1997. She serves the Day School, Religious School, Pre-School and Adult Education Programs of this reform congregation consisting of 1700 families. Susan is a member of AJL, MLA (Maryland Library Association), MEMO (Maryland Educational Media Organization), and AIMS Librarian's group (Association of Independent Maryland Schools).

The following lessons were created to enhance our current curriculum with technology. I developed several lessons using Filamentality, a free program available on the Internet, which provides a template for three types of on line activities. They are a hot list, a web sampler and a web quest.

A hot list is a list of websites that can be sorted into different categories. Often, I would generate a list of websites for a particular unit and my students would have trouble transferring the addresses to the computer. Sometimes students would also elect to use the many search engines available and find too many sites or sites with questionable validity. This list is at one site that you can punch up on the Internet before your students come to class. This saves the time of typing in the addresses and the students can go directly to the information you

want them to have. It can be used for an overview or introduction to a unit of study, or for a more in-depth study of a particular subject. One such example is the one I created on Southern Plantations, which can be found at <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listsouthernsu.html>.

A more complex activity that can be created is a web sampler. You can put an assignment on the Internet and ask questions about the information in particular web sites. My bibliography sampler is an example of this. It can be found at <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/sambibliogrsu.html>.

The third activity, which requires a time period of several weeks to work on, is a web quest. I divided my class into several teams who had to research a particular point of view. Each faction had a unique set of web sites to visit and gather information. Each team used critical thinking skills to come up with solutions to the problem posed. One such example of a web quest is the one I put together on Jerusalem. The address is <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/webjerusalem.html>.

Another way that I have used the Internet this year is with a research activity called Fact Finders. Students were challenged to find various types of information and in the process learn how to use the different references and resources in the library. I divided my classes into four teams (cooperative groupings) and called this activity a contest. Each week I gave teams a set of unique questions to answer and a "suggestion" or two on how to answer the questions. Teams earned points for each question they answered correctly. I started out slowly with just two questions and built up to more. I also provided the materials each team needed to find the answers to the questions. We started with the social studies textbook and questions using the table of contents

and index. In the fourth week each team had six questions. I left an Almanac on each table and told the children that they could use any resource in the library to answer their questions. No "suggestions" were given but each team could ask me or the library aide for help. We also had other teachers and adults wander into the library who stayed to help and became engaged in the activity. I was very excited that the teams decided to divide up the questions amongst themselves and seek out other resources such as the Internet, the online encyclopedia and hard copy encyclopedias. Of course, I had checked ahead to see if the answers could be found by more than one key word in the question. For instance, everyone got a question about a past president. The name of the persons given were familiar to most of the students and without much prompting the children discovered that they could find the answer by looking up U.S. Presidents in the Almanac (use of prior knowledge), but a few still took the route of looking up the person's name in a biographical dictionary.

I was really impressed with the level of motivation of the students. The time usually passed so quickly that all the classes ran overtime and wanted to stay. The students worked together cooperatively. They developed their own approaches to research by using different keywords. They learned how to use an index successfully. The children became familiar with different types of reference books and doing on line searches. I also believe that the children will be more likely to remember different types of resources when it is time for them to complete a research paper. The final activity culminated with a marathon of questions. These were scored and the teams earned prizes.

Final Fact Finders Marathon Directions

You may use any resource in the library: the library catalog, reference books, encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, dictionaries, directories, SIRS, Grolier's On-Line, or any Internet website to help answer your questions.

You may divide up the questions between your teammates.

Don't forget to look for KEYWORDS in the question.

Hint: Use these words to find information in the index of books, or as keywords to perform a search in Grolier on Line or SIRS or any search engine on the computer.

Marathon Fact Finders Team 1

1. Which is the bigger part of the brain, cerebrum or cerebellum?
2. Beijing is the capital of what country?
3. Was Dianna a Greek or a Roman goddess?
4. What is normal air pressure?
5. How tall is the space shuttle system?
6. On what continent is the country Colombia?
7. What color is the flower of a compass plant?
8. What did Arnold Lobel do for a living?
9. What is a mentor?
10. How many moons does Neptune have?
11. How many sides does a pentagon have?

12. Is a gila monster a reptile or a bird?
13. How many justices are on the Supreme Court of the U.S.?
14. How many symphonies did Ludwig Von Beethoven compose?
15. What baseball team did Joe DiMaggio play for?
16. Was Ivan Turgenev a novelist or a composer?
17. What country was Joseph Stalin dictator of?
18. What is a whelk?
19. What is the speed of light?
20. What will you need if you want to travel around Venice?

Marathon Fact Finders Team 2

1. Are turtles mammals or reptiles?
2. Who is the Governor of Florida?
3. Which is longer, a meter or a yard?
4. Who invented the electric light?
5. On what continent would you find kangaroos living?
6. What is the largest moth?
7. How many teeth do humans have?
8. What is a tsunami?
9. What animal breathes through gills?
10. How far is the earth from the sun?
11. What is the word for a male duck?
12. When was the zipper invented?
13. What is the population of the United States?
14. How many professional baseball teams play in the National League?
15. What is the official language of Quebec, Canada?
16. Who did Anne Mansfield Sullivan teach?
17. Do Stalactites grow on the floor or the roof of a cave?
18. How many wings does a dragonfly have?
19. What book won the first Newberry Award?
20. What is the area in square feet of New York City?

Marathon Fact Finders Team 3

1. What is the capital of Brazil?
2. How many kinds of elm trees are there?
3. Do about 80,000 or 800,000 or 8,000,000 people live in Tokyo?
4. How tall does a tobacco plant grow to?
5. In what state is the U.S. Military Academy located?
6. What is a vein?
7. What is the color of a litchi fruit?
8. The Yangtze River is the longest river in what country?
9. In what ocean does the turbot fish live?
10. Genetics is the study of what?
11. Which is the largest Great Lake?
12. Was Jules Verne an author or a scientist?
13. How many feet are in a mile?

14. How tall is the Eiffel tower?
15. What is a zither?
16. How many moons does Saturn have?
17. What was Ty Cobb's career total of hits?
18. Are chipmunks rodents or reptiles?
19. What language do they speak in Liberia?
20. What is the tallest mountain in the world?

Marathon Fact Finders Team 4

1. How long is the Great Wall of China?
2. In what country does the Loch Ness monster live?
3. Padre Island is off the coast of what state?
4. Is the electric eel a fish or a mammal?
5. What kind of instrument is a piccolo?
6. Who wrote "The Song of Hiawatha?"
7. How many teams are there in the National Hockey League?
8. Radon is a chemical. Is it a liquid, a solid, or a gas?
9. Does the portulaca like full sun or shade?
10. What's a scythe used for?
11. What is the capital of Ecuador?
12. When did Delaware enter the union?
13. How many species of octopus are there?
14. Who invented the cotton gin?
15. How many U.S. Senators are in Congress?
16. What's the diameter of a dartboard?
17. When was Benjamin Disraeli born?
18. How many legs does an insect have?
19. What's the population of Hong Kong?
20. How many sides does an octagon have?

I also have a website with library links at <http://www.bhcong.org/library/html>. I have divided the links by databases, homework help, fun sites and teacher resources. Also, I posted directions for using Athena, our automated catalog, SIRS Discoverer and Grolier's On Line at [http://www.bhcong.org/Day School/Homework/research.html](http://www.bhcong.org/Day%20School/Homework/research.html). If you have any questions you may email me at sberman@bhcong.org.