



best practices

As a teacher, your time is precious.

What is the best way to help your students excel in reading and all of its related skills of literacy—decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, prediction, speaking, reading, listening, writing? We sought the ex-

perience and advice of top educators and librarians in how to make the most of the resources in your school's library, and you'll find their words of wisdom in this section. Their advice: When you connect your classroom to the library, everyone benefits!

See the Best Practices videos at the Hands Teachers Resource Guide webpage:
www.handsacrosstheocean.net/TeachersResourceGuide.htm



THE LIBRARY AS CLASSROOM At Lauders Primary School on St. Vincent, a Grade 2 teacher conducts a Language Arts lesson in the school library

Lydia Quinn

Teacher Trainer, Language Arts

Responsible for primary school curriculum and training teachers in Language Arts, Promoting Reading, and Promoting Writing

Antigua and Barbuda

“Oh! The library! It is a wealth of information.

It is an *oasis* that teachers and students should regularly visit and utilize. The library is the *foundation* of reading. Without a library, without books, reading cannot be taught effectively. That is how critical the library is.

If a school doesn't have a library, if a school doesn't utilize a library, very likely the students will not be able to read. They will not be efficient readers. They will not be proficient readers. Apart from what takes place in the classroom, students should have the opportunity to go to the library to explore.

“By exploring the library, students are exposed to various genres of writing—fiction, nonfiction, different styles of writing. Their vocabulary is expanded, their experiences are expanded, because they may not have traveled to Canada or the United States, but by reading they are transported to another world. We know that our experiences, our experiential knowledge is critical in being able to negotiate the reading experience.

“When a student reads a text, the child uses his or her experiential knowledge in order to negotiate what the text is saying. And so, the more exposure students get to books, the more this increases their reading proficiency.

“Libraries are *critical to the reading process*. Teachers need to utilize the library when they



“When teachers use strategies that utilize books and text, I believe that under the Early Learners Programme the comprehension skills of Caribbean students will see a dramatic increase”

are teaching reading—I can't see how you can teach reading without using a book. You should not be using, let's say, isolated sentences on a board. You should engage the student so they can use all the clues of the text, so that they can negotiate the text. So, children use the pictures, they use the sentences, they use the words around the sentences to negotiate what is being said in the text.

“And that engagement with books is what will give them a successful reading encounter. And the more that children read, the more experience they get in terms of how authors structure their sentences. So, when a child has seen that before, and now that he or she is faced with it, they will think, ‘Oh! I know that. I know that after this, comes that.’”



Essential Role of Books in the Reading Process

“Books are very important in teaching phonics, because books have all the sounds that you are teaching. Teachers can’t just rely on phonics in isolation, because reading is a complex process that doesn’t rely solely on decoding or phonetic analysis. In reading, you have structural analysis. You have contextual analysis. You have comprehension. You can’t just rely on the student decoding the word.

“What books afford is that contextual analysis, so that you can look at other sentences, you can read on, and then you can say, ‘Oh, look at the picture, so this must be what the text is saying.’ So now you apply your phonetic skill as well as the contextual analysis to be able to call and understand what the passage is saying.

Books: Where Grammar Comes Alive

“Reading books is how children are exposed to grammar, which also is so critical. This is how children are going to learn the grammar of the language—from reading it. Also, they come with their knowledge of the grammar, to be able to read. They know that in English you may read, say, the words ‘their book.’ Children are going to expect, because of their knowledge of grammar, that a verb is going to come after.

“So, those things help children in the reading process. And it is a child’s exposure to books that is going to concretize their understanding of the grammar and their total understanding of a text.”

The Problem with Phonics in Isolation

“Phonics is just one aspect of reading. It is just

one approach to teaching reading. Because in reading you have phonetic analysis, you have sight words, you have structural analysis, and you have contextual analysis. All these are approaches to help students to recognize a word.

“And then, of course, you have comprehension, which deals with vocabulary, and books are so critical in furthering and enhancing a student’s vocabulary. Phonics is mainly about calling the word, but comprehension is about understanding what the word means. And books are going to give you that. Because the



sentence is going to give you context in which that word is used. And the pictures as well.

“So, for example, if you are teaching phonics in isolation, and you have the word ‘chair.’ You have a picture representing the word, and the student is able to call the word phonetically. They are blending it, ‘ch’ and ‘air.’ They are going to see the word ‘chair,’ and they are going to see how it is used in a sentence, and they are going to understand that, yes, a chair is something that you sit on.

“But now with a book, they are going to find that the word ‘chair’ doesn’t always mean something that you sit on. ‘Chair’ can also be used as a verb to mean that you are heading a meeting. So, from the sentence they now see a new way the word ‘chair’ is being used—that the president of the company chaired the meeting. That

is the knowledge and the exposure that books give to children. They see how words are used in different contexts. This strengthens their meaning and their understanding of text.”

The Essence of Teaching Comprehension

“Nearly all of our reading strategies that focus on reading comprehension require the use of books. When we talk about Directed Reading and Thinking Activity (DRTA), which is an excellent reading-comprehension strategy, you have to use the text, because you have students predicting.

“So, you read the title first and you ask them to *predict* what the book is about. Then you read a little more and you ask them to predict what is going to happen in the story. You ask them questions, you have them verify what they are saying, justify what they are saying, and so they are actively engaged with the text. And you can only get that from using a text where, as the students are reading, as they are questioning, as they are predicting, they are constructing meaning. When you use reading-comprehension tools such as DRTA, those strategies strengthen students’ comprehension skills.

“But it is because our teachers have been teaching comprehension skills in isolation and without the use of text—you know, books. The emphasis of the Early Learners Programme (ELP) is on using books—one of the pillars of the ELP approach is using a book or text as an anchor text. An anchor is something that sustains the lesson.

“Every reading lesson must have an anchor text. It is critical, it is the crux—the anchor text is everything that the lesson is going to revolve around. Research and experience has shown that teaching students this way, using a book or text as an anchor text, is the most effective way of increasing students’ reading ability and their comprehension skills.

“If teachers use strategies that utilize books and text, such as advocated by ELP, I believe that we will see a dramatic increase in the comprehension skills of our students.”

Melina Anselm

Librarian

Bagatelle Primary School

54 Students • Grades K to 6

Winner, 2016-2017 Hands Literacy Award

Dominica

“I’ve been in the library with the kids for over a year now, and I’ve enjoyed every moment of it. I love to see children read. I love to encourage the children to read, because reading is important. We have to read in every aspect of life, so we have to start them reading at any early age.

“With the smaller ones, it takes a little more time to get them to enjoy reading. What we do is create a setting where they will have fun and enjoy being in the library. We allow them to do picture-reading, we allow them to do retelling. If I read a story to them, at the end of the story I will ask them simple questions such as, ‘Who are the characters? What was the setting? What was the problem in the story?’ And as long as they can tell me the answers, I know that they have understood what I have read to them.

“The kids enjoy retelling, too! Sometimes they put it in their own words, make it a little more fun. Sometimes we do a little acting out of the story—the kids will act out the characters, so each child has an individual part to play. And they do this so very well!

“The smaller ones, from Grades K to 3, they gather on the floor with their little pillows. I sit with them and I read to them. I don’t put myself aside. I am with them—that is how I read to the smaller ones.

“The bigger kids, I supervise them. They know what to do when they come to the library. They choose their books and check them out; sometimes I will appoint one student as librarian for the day. If I know that a particular child has difficulty in reading, I will ask them to read the first page to me, to make sure that



“We need to teach our children to love books, to encourage them to read, to read *to* them and read *with* them. Then our children will be in a better place.”

they are capable of reading the book. If they have difficulty in the first paragraph, I ask them to change their book, because it is a difficult book that they cannot read. So, I allow them to change their book for one that they can understand.

“I also encourage the children, especially the bigger ones, to do book reports. For some of them, it’s a bit challenging. Sometimes they might not know exactly how to do it. They think they have to write the entire story, but I always tell them that a book report is simple: What was the problem in the story? Who created the problem? How was it solved? And what was the end of the story—was it a good story, or was it a bad story? Was it fact or was it fiction? And they know the difference between fact and fiction.



They know fiction is make-believe. They ask, ‘Miss, is this a make-believe book?’ I say, ‘Read it and you will find out.’

“I teach the children to understand punctuation marks, so they know when to pause for a comma, when to stop for a full stop, and know what a question mark means. When they do that, at the end of the book I ask them to retell the story, they are able to retell it properly because they have read it properly. If you do not read properly or fluently, it is difficult for them to understand what they have read. Just by giving them these little hints about reading, I have been able to see the improvement in their reading.

“We also have children who are not reading

at grade level. If I know that a student is slow in reading, I will ask the others to sit quietly and read, and I will pull out that child, sit with the child and allow the child to read to me. If they have problems in pronouncing the words, I will not just tell them, “That word is “cat,”” I will ask them to break it down, to segment it, and do the letter sounds, until they get it.

Collaborating with Teachers

“For the teachers, we have a Teachers’ Resource Center, an area in the library stocked with books specifically for them. If they are teaching a particular subject, such as Science, for example, they may ask me if I have a book on, let’s say, resources. I give it to them, they take it to their classroom to do their lesson, and at the

end of the day they bring it back. If the following day they need it, they'll come back to me. We have quite a variety of books that the teachers can use to help teach their subject area."

Whose Library Is It?

"I say to the children all the time, 'The library is not mine. The library belongs to you.' I want them to be part of the library. Most times, they come in with their class, and one or two will say, 'Miss, can I check out the book? Miss, I want to check out the books.' I say, 'O.K., you do it this time, and next time another student will do it.' I pick a child for every class, a different child each week, to check out the books, and I record each book in their reading log. That is how I know who has which book. We do not just give out books; we keep a log every day. The library is for the children, it is not for me. I encourage them to take part in everything that we do. When the new books from Hands Across the Sea arrive, the children get very excited. They come to the library to help pack the books, stamp the books, color-code the books.

"Our library is a welcoming, kids-friendly library. Although we have a timetable when each class comes in, every child is free to come into the library whenever he or she feels they want to. If they borrowed a book maybe two days ago and they want to change their book, they can just come in. I am always here to accommodate them and help them in whatever way I can."

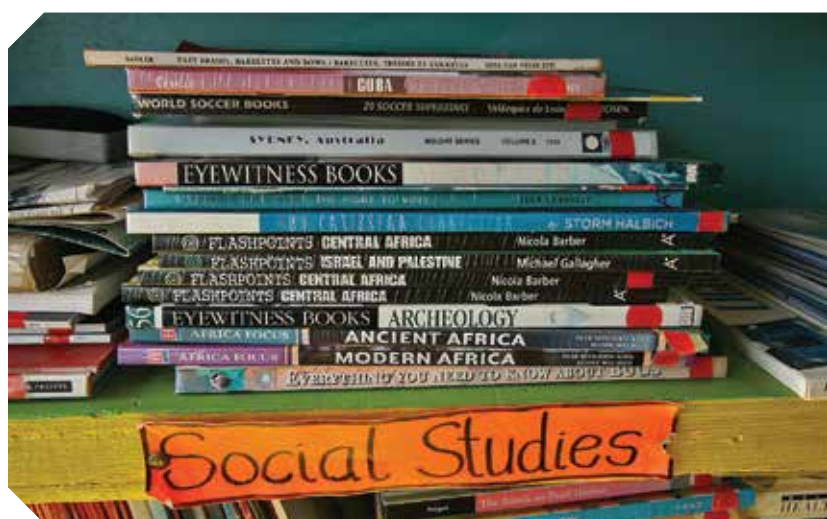
A Better Future for Our Children

"I want to encourage everybody, teachers and parents all over the Caribbean, to read *to* our children, and to read *with* our children. Sometimes when I say that to people, they ask, 'What do you mean, read *to* our children and read *with* our children?' I tell them, 'Normally we tell our children to take a book and read, but how do we know they are reading? Sometimes a child is just paging through a book, not reading. But if you just sit for 10 or 15 minutes with the child, you ask the child to read out loud, you can see the progress of the child. You can know if the

child is reading, if the child has difficulty in pronunciation. You can monitor the child.'

"Sometimes you can just sit with your child, say, 'O.K., I'm going to read to you.' You read the book to the child and you ask the child to listen. At the end of it you ask questions about the story to find out if the child was listening. Not only reading but listening is important, because when somebody is talking or reading out loud, the child will know, 'I need to listen,' because I need to get that information, what the person is saying.

"These are the little things, as parents, as



teachers, that we can do with our children. I do that with my kids all the time, big as they are. I read with my daughter. I take a book and say, 'O.K., we are going to read together.' And she is next to me, reading along with me. I don't go too fast. I go at her pace, her level. And that is one way we can help our children to improve in reading, and to encourage them to read.

"Don't ever make reading a punishment. Sometimes people punish their children by sending them off to read a book—and that makes children hate reading, because they see it as a punishment.

"We need to teach our children to love books, to encourage them to read, to read *to* them and read *with* them. Then our children will develop a love for reading. And our children will be in a better place if we teach them to read, and to read well."

Eulana Weekes

Librarian

Charlestown Primary School

292 Students • Grades K to 6

Winner, 2016-2017 Hands Literacy Award

St. Kitts and Nevis

“We now have two library spaces at our school. The main library accommodates students from Grade 4 to Grade 6, and the new Literacy Centre accommodates students from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The Literacy Centre space was once a classroom with boring cream walls. I knew what I wanted for this space—a beautiful, attractive, child-friendly, welcoming, comfortable space for students with lots of bright colors and creativity. I and a friend painted the room in a rainbow of eye-catching colors in one weekend. I added curtains, because I love curtains, and I added a play-mat with lots of teddy bears and cushions.

“But I wasn’t quite satisfied. I got some more shelves, added the lovely books from Hands Across the Sea, added some literacy resources, and made some creative charts for the walls (usually I go to Pinterest for help to see how to make my charts creative). The Literacy Centre was completed in two weeks. We dedicated lots of time, over-time to the task.

“Since I have implemented this new space, the Kindergarten to Grade 3 students are more excited about reading, more excited about books, and they love having a chance to come in during their spare time and scheduled sessions to sit down, relax, enjoy themselves, ask some questions, do some puzzles and art projects, and color and read.

“This is their space, their playground. They want to come cuddle with their teddy bears, grab a book, take one out, see which one I want, then they leave the books and go (and leave everything there for me to clean!).



“I knew what I wanted for our new Literacy Centre: a child-friendly, beautiful, attractive, welcoming, and comfortable space with bright colors and creativity. A playground for Kindergarten to Grade 3 children!”

“Every three weeks to a month, I do a big cleaning at the Literacy Centre, which includes cleaning the shelves, rearranging the books, making sure that the children have enough space to read and do their arts and crafts.”

Reaching Out to Pre-Schoolers

“I have extended the library program out to a pre-school here on Nevis. I held a workshop teaching parents how to help their children at home in the area of reading readiness and phonics. This program is thought of as an exciting one and a different one for preschool parents, as I have given them the opportunity to experience book borrowing for their three-year-olds and four-year-olds so that they can learn to read at an early age. The book lending for pre-



school children is done on Fridays.

“It was an encouragement by Heidi Fagerberg, the Hands Across the Sea Literacy Link for St. Kitts and Nevis, to do monthly displays at the library. For January, I featured Alexander Hamilton, the first Treasury Secretary of the United States, who was born on Nevis. The display generated a lot of interest, not only in the students but also the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society. Our Grade 3 class was invited to meet with the great, great, great granddaughter-in-law of Alexander Hamilton, and a representative of the United States Coast Guard. It was very exciting for the students.”

Using Library Resources to Teach

“My position here at the Literacy Centre takes different forms—it’s a different style of teach-

ing. Each grade has a scheduled session once per week, and I also do one-on-one with students who need extra help. Some of the lessons that I teach at the Literacy Centre are general lessons which include sight words, reading comprehension, summaries, singular and plural, antonyms, synonyms, and homonyms, just to name a few.

“With the lessons that I teach in the library, I work in close collaboration with the teachers to see the topic that they find most challenging to the students, and then I use the opportunity to reinforce the same topics in an exciting, fun way. The students normally get to do activities like lucky dips, puzzles, and arts and crafts.”

Teaming Up with Teachers

“The teachers visit the library often—I have a



very close relationship with all of them. The teachers usually come to the library to get resources made by me, or some of the resources sent by Hands Across the Sea. With the implementation of the Early Learners Programme, the teachers have been encouraged to use books to anchor their lessons or to start their lessons. They tell me what topics they need books for, and I direct them to the correct books that they would probably need. I also give assistance

by making flipcharts or teaching lessons.

“The teachers are very grateful for the resources that we have, because many Literacy Centre books can be used in most of the lessons that the teachers teach—whether it is English,

Social Studies, or Science. With the use of the books, the students are better able to understand what is being taught by the teachers. Sometimes the teachers will come and take enough books for every student in the class, or just one book and use it to teach their lessons.”



Cyra Fletcher

Teacher/Librarian

Ave Maria RC Girls Primary School

533 Students • Grades 3 to 6

St Lucia



“I am a new librarian. I’m not only in charge of the library, I am also the Study Skills teacher for Grade 5 and the Remedial Reading teacher.

“I have been at Ave Maria RC Girls Primary for some years, and I have seen the areas where some of the children have reading problems, so I have put a folder together with assessments that I have given them, tests that I have given them, and exercises that I have given them. I’ve developed my own worksheets from the internet. I test each child who comes to me in the library.

“I have been doing sight words and two-letter sight words, using the leveled readers in our library. For my Grade 6 students I have developed ‘creative book reports’—they draw or put pictures together for their book reports. We have some very good artists.

“The other classes come in, they sit down, they read, and they discuss the stories that they have read. The teachers tell me, when library time comes the children are eager to go. They don’t want to miss a library period! If they do miss a day, they want a day where they can make up for their session. The children are very, very excited about the library.

“I am having fun! I find that my time in the library is worthwhile. I have just started, and there are so many things I want to do. But it takes time to build your library properly, the way that you want to. It depends on how enthusiastic the teacher is about the library. If they are not enthusiastic, the library will be just a library. It takes the principal, the teachers, the teacher/librarian, and the students to build the library. It takes everyone, together, to find

“Many children today do not want to read. They prefer to go on to the computer, or to watch the television. It takes everyone together—the principal, the teachers, the librarian—to find ways to get children to read. It takes using all of your creativity as a teacher, as a librarian, to get children engaged in reading books.”

ways to get children to read, to get them into the library. Because too many of our children today do not want to read. They prefer to go on to the computer, or to watch the television. It takes using all of your creativity as a teacher, as a librarian, to get children engaged in reading books.”

Melisa Hippolyte

Teacher/Librarian

Vide Bouteille Primary School

400 Students • Grades K to 6

Winner, 2017-2018 Hands Literacy Award

St. Lucia

“One of our first initiatives was to have Student Librarians. Each class currently has two Student Librarians, preferably one male, one female, and they are in charge of their class. When they go to the library they take their class along with them, with their little notebooks that we made for them, with our school name and teacher’s name on the front. The children are allowed to take a book, and the Student Librarians record it for them. The book is returned to our librarian, which we currently have on staff, who signs it in. We have an electronic database presently, so she is able to keep account of it this way. We keep two borrowing records to make sure our books are kept safe.

“We decided to have Student Librarians from Kindergarten all the way to Grade 6. Although Kindergartners can’t write, but just to make them feel that they are part of the school, we encourage them, and they all wear their little pins on their shirts that say, ‘Vide Bouteille Primary Student Librarian.’

“We found that the Student Librarians work very well. Because they have this new responsibility, they encourage their friends, and sometimes the encouragement is not altogether sweet—it’s excited, like, ‘Let’s go! Let’s go! Let’s go!’ They need the others to go with them, they pull them to the library during lunchtime and after school. The librarians have the added privilege of being able to take two books out of the library, which makes them feel more grown-up than the rest of their class.

“We have had our challenges, of course, like anything else. Sometimes when the books



**“Our Student Librarians
are very excited, the way
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and after school:**

‘Let’s go! Let’s go! Let’s go!’”

are borrowed they are not returned. Or when a book is returned it is not in the condition that it left. So, we sent out a letter to every parent—a kind of a contract that the parent has to sign. If a child takes a book out and does not return it, the parent has to replace it. Maybe not the very same one, but another book, so that the number of books in our library is not reduced. Or if the child makes marks on a book, the parent has to pay a fine.

“If a child returns a book late, we started with a fine. Then we realized that not all of our children are of the same reading level or reading abilities. Some of them take much longer with the books. So, we just let this slide. Those who read faster return earlier, those who read slower return later. But when the term has end-

ed, all books have to be accounted for when we are closing the library.

“We currently have two (adult) librarians in the library—myself, I’m in the classroom now, but the Student Librarians can always come up and ask, if they have any problems, any issues. What we said to them originally was, yes, you are in charge of your class when you go to the library. But if anybody says anything to you or disrespects you in any way or they are not listening, we are there. And we are able to step in and help them, to guide them.

“Now you have, as with all children, you have some Student Librarians that, no matter how much you talk, they still get into trouble. So, what I say to the Student Librarians is, ‘I speak to you once, the second time I speak to you—the other children all want your position—I will switch librarians.’

“The teachers, since they are more familiar with their children, were given the opportunity to choose two persons in their class that they felt to be more responsible to have this position. And we have meetings with the Student Librarians every so often just to discuss their roles—the fact that they must be responsible. They must show to the others that when they wear their Student Librarian badge it means that, ‘I am a disciplined child, I’m a responsible child, I can take care of my books, that I can guide you to the library.’

“We started with the Kindergartners to instill this in them in that young age. Yes, they are just coming to us at five years old, six years old, coming in from the pre-school, but just having this position given to them makes them feel a little more grown up. They start to learn to be more responsible, to follow the lead of the upper grades.

“We have a school motto, and we have a



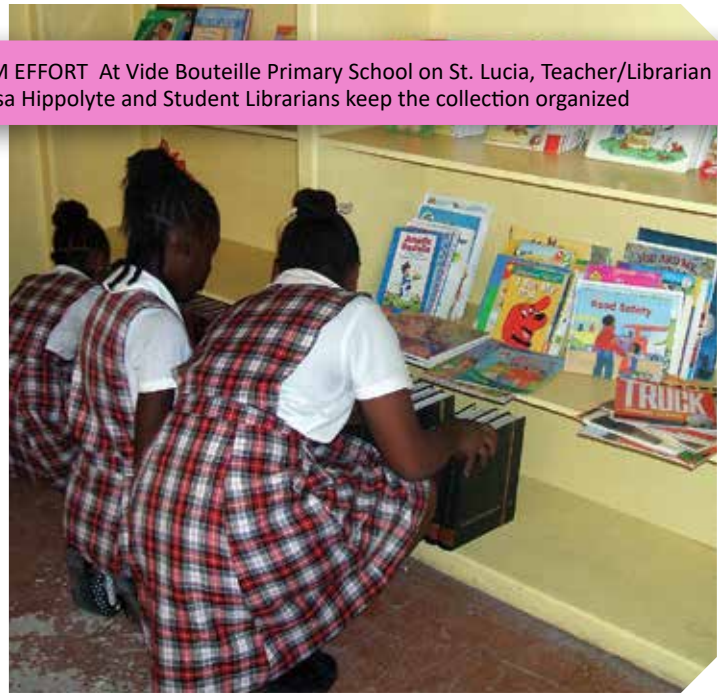
school word: discipline. This comes from our current Principal, Lyrill Arthur-Stanislaus—she says the word ‘discipline’ and the students understand what it means. I have encouraged my Student Librarians to set this example. Many of my Student Librarians also have merit badges—merit badge on one side of their shirt, Student Librarian badge on the other.

“Based on this, the Student Librarians have learned to be on the straight and narrow path or they know they will lose this privilege. And they all want to keep the privilege—they want the Student Librarian badge attached to them, they want to show that, yes, I am in charge of you. Children like to be in charge! For these reasons, the Student Librarian program has worked for us.

“I am under the belief that it will also work for others. It does take work. It does not come simple. It is not something that you will start



TEAM EFFORT At Vide Bouteille Primary School on St. Lucia, Teacher/Librarian Melisa Hippolyte and Student Librarians keep the collection organized



today and expect it to go perfect for you within the week. It has taken us time, it has taken us trials. We have had to switch children, we have had to speak to teachers about their children, we have had to speak to parents. We have done all of this, and now we are at a place where the Student Librarian program works for us.”

How We Set Up our Library

“We divided our library into two sections: the children’s section and the teachers’ section. The library has five sets of bookshelves; the two outer ends are teachers’ resources. Not only do we have resources that they can use in their classroom, but we have books that cater just to the teachers. Some of our teachers like romance novels, so we have books like this. Some are more into religious novels, so we have books that cater to that. We have some word puzzles, things to pull them into the library.

“In addition to being a Librarian, I am a Grade 4 teacher—back in the classroom after eight years as the IT teacher. When a teacher comes into my classroom and asks me for something on nouns, I ask them, ‘Have you checked the library? Because we have books on nouns. If you take the book from the library and give it to me, I will make copies for you.’ It is not all the time that we teachers have to go online

and research something! We already have books in the library that we’ve received from Hands Across the Sea on language topics, maths topics, and many different subject areas. Let’s make use of them.

“Personally, I love reading. I have gone through a number of our library books and I can identify which books have what concepts in them. I am able to tell teachers, ‘Go to the teachers’ section to get this book, it has exercises for the children.’ I try to encourage the teachers as much as possible to utilize the library, not just with their classes but for their classes, and also for their own personal use.

“Our library is not only open to our students and our teachers—we also encourage parents to borrow. And we do have parents who are into reading. It so happened that when we were repainting the library, the afternoon I was on the floor laying tiles, a parent came in and asked to borrow a book—it had never dawned on me, to have the parents borrow books. We give them a deadline to return the books, and they check out books just like the children. We have to make our school a part of the community. When we want something, we ask the community. So, when they want something, we do our best to respond.”



From Shared Space to Dedicated Library

"The contribution that Hands Across the Sea has made to us is invaluable. When we started the library, the room was half library, half classroom. When we saw the number of books that came from Hands Across the Sea, we realized, 'O.K., we need to make the library a designated library and nothing else.' We cleaned everything out, our caretaker painted the walls, I tiled the floor, the Ministry of Education gave us desks for the library, and we set up a beautiful library.

"Hands Across the Sea has contributed more to us than books. They have helped us by coming in, seeing what we need, offering assistance, offering guidance, giving us the Hands Library Manual, to see what we could incorporate into Vide Bouteille Primary to make our library stand out. To make it something that not just we can be proud of, but others in our district can be proud of when they come to visit us. When we have meetings at the school, we meet in the library because it is one of the nicest rooms on the compound!"

Why Have a Library?

"Some say, 'What is the point of having a library?' I believe that a school library is very beneficial to students and teachers alike. When things are found in one location, it just makes your life run smoother—you know where things are, you know how to get them.

"Having a full-time class this year, and having it be an exam class at that, has posed challenges to being able to take the children to the library—but this is where the Student Librarians come into play. If I am out of my classroom doing something, I can take that opportunity to have my Student Librarians go to the library and get things done—check books out, return books, do what they have to do. So, my class is not left in the classroom, doing nothing.

"As a teacher, we all know that our whole day is not spent in the classroom. There's always something—maybe there's a teachers' meeting, or a parent calls on the phone, you always have to come out to do something. So, these are the little times you can use. Maybe not

the entire class gets to go to the library, because some classes are bigger than others—then you can send half of the class today, send the other half tomorrow.”

If You Don't Have Space for a Central Library

“Not every school has space for a central library.

In that case, it is very important for every teacher to have a library in their classroom. Just set up a little corner in your classroom. Get a bookshelf made, get some boxes, use whatever you have, whatever amount of space you have in your classroom, and create a little library area.

“So, your children get accustomed to going to the classroom library corner to read. They know, ‘Miss may be busy, but I know I can do

the work Miss gives me. So, I take the book, I have it in my desk. I’m done with the work, I can open the book and read. Miss steps out of the classroom, I have a book that I can read.”

Differentiated Reading

“At our school, we do a lot of differentiated reading. Every teacher has children of different levels in their class. If you are working with one group of children, you can have the others sit and read during that time or go down to the library with their Student Librarian, and return. If your class has differentiated learning, you can have two Student Librarians one from the upper set of children, and one from your slower set of children. So, when the slower children are not occupied, they can go to the library on their

own. When they return, the other set can go. Teachers do not always have time to go to the library with the children. So, the Student Librarians are able to go with the children to take the books. Or, you have children in the class who are faster readers; when they return the books,

the Student Librarians can go to the library and change their books. It’s not just good for the children, it also eases the teacher’s workload, because the teacher does not have to be the one to go to the library with the children. The Student Librarians, especially from Grade 3 and up, they are able to take on that responsibility all by themselves. The infant block still needs a teacher to go with them, be-

The Secret to Success

I have a boy in my Grade 4 class who reads all the time, and he’s a 95% student and above, all the time. If I turn my back to write on the board, and he feels, ‘O.K. Miss is doing something,’ he takes out his book and he reads.

Now the other children are in competition to keep up with him. They ask me, ‘Miss, why is he always at the 95? Miss, how does he know so many words? Miss, when you call a word, he knows already knows about it.’

This boy answers their ‘why?’ questions by saying, ‘Because I read. I read! When I read and I don’t know a word, I go to Miss, I go to my mommy, and I ask, What does the word mean?’ And then I’m able to use it.’

This has encouraged the others to start reading. Some of them can only read one-sentence books, but that does not matter. There isn’t a person prouder than them when they can read the little book and they come to me, ‘Miss, you know I was able to finish the book you gave me last night!’ Or, ‘Miss, let me read for you!’

I have no choice, whatever I’m doing, to put it on the side, and sit and listen to them read. And this excites me, because I love to read. And I love to hear children when they can read. – *Melisa Hippolyte*

cause some of them can’t write as yet. Or need assistance just to copy the names of the books.”

Time Management

“As teachers, we are always trying to find ways to manage our time. I know wholeheartedly that teaching is a lot of work. In addition to working in the library, I have an exam class, I do a lot of copying for my school, and I am in charge of banking for my school. All of this takes a lot out of my time, but I have just had to learn to manage it. Encourage your children to be responsible children, that they can take care of the books, be in charge of each other, go to the library, get their books on their own, return the books on their own, and things will run smoother for you. I can testify to that.”

Luanda Haywood

Librarian

Liberta Primary School

108 Students • Grades K to 6

Winner, 2016-2017 Hands Literacy Award

Antigua and Barbuda

“Our library started as the school kitchen.

We had a collection of pots, pans, and some old books donated from other entities over the years—but these persons were just sending the books they didn’t want. The donation was well-meaning, but the books were not appropriate for our children. The language was above their heads and the books were in poor condition. So now, almost all of our books are new books, donated by Hands Across the Sea, and we are really grateful for their help. We had a book sale of the old books—it was a hit (the children bought books for their parents). In that way we had the room cleaned out.

“Mrs. Pauline Simon, the principal back in 2015, encouraged us to create a library space where the children would feel comfortable. In doing this we incorporated the children’s help. We asked them about the type of books they would like to see in the library. Each class presented a list, and from that list we made our Wish List for Hands. Most of the books that you see in our library are what the children want.

“And the children were also a part of the decorations, the setting for the library—what they think, how they feel, that is the way our library looks. One day a sailing couple, Isabel and Mick, along with Lisa Tomlinson, the Hands Literacy for Antigua, painted the library—and the children were involved in the painting, too. So the children have ownership of the library.

“It’s just a wonderful feeling, when I look at our before and after pictures and see all the work that has gone in by students, volunteers, teachers, and staff. We have a great library now,



“The library is the children’s space, their own special space. The library is where they practice their reading skills, where they learn about different genres of books, where they get to express themselves freely.”

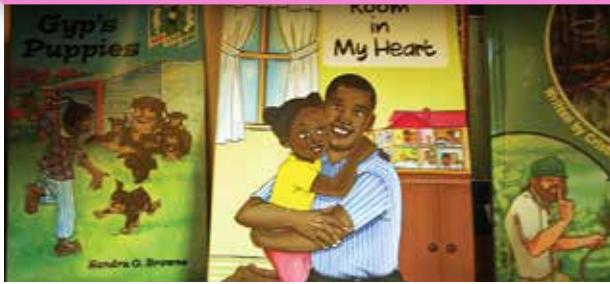
and it doesn’t look like a kitchen anymore.”

What Our Student Librarians Contribute

“We have Student Librarians, and I find that the students relate more to the Student Librarians than to myself. The Student Librarians run the library, and they run it very well. They pack up the books, they organize things at lunch-time when the children visit the library, so the children are not left on their own. Other children look at this and say, ‘Oh! I can be a Student Librarian too. Because someone from my class is a Student Librarian.’ The Student Librarians are very responsible, and they have ideas for spreading the love of reading. I had a Student Librarian tell me this week that she wants to



The library at Liberta Primary School on Antigua began as the school's kitchen, then blossomed into a vibrant school library



hold a library workshop. They come, they read, they tell me what they have written, and they really love coming to the library. Their ownership of the library makes me feel really good."

Our Library Programs

"My Grade 5 and Grade 6 students are engaged in a poetry competition, where they write poetry using different figurative language mechanisms and devices. They are presently writing poems that feature similes and metaphors; the poems are going to be displayed in the library. In my library unit, I teach the difference between fiction and nonfiction.

"We had an activity last year where the children had to choose books based on whether the books are fiction or nonfiction, and they did a little talk on the books they chose. We have the Author of the Month program, where the children write their stories to share with the rest of the school, and display them in the library."

Why Have a School Library?

"I think that a school library is very important. Some teachers may say, 'I have a classroom library,' and that can work. But what I find is that when a child comes to the school's central library, which has a far larger number and diversity of books than any classroom library, they have entered a different atmosphere.

"The library is where they get the chance

to practice their reading skills, they get to learn more about different types of genres and books, they get to express themselves freely. The children are not in their teacher's classroom, not in their teacher's space. They are in their own space."

A Library's Place

"As with any program, it takes a while for everyone to get on board with a school library. Our curriculum is very packed, and time is tight. What I've done is to create a space in the library for teachers to come and borrow when they get the time. Our lower grade teachers come in from time to time, and they have been using library books to enhance their lessons. The library has books that are geared toward certain concepts, especially in language arts, phonics, and spelling. I know that children come to the library, they return to their classroom and say, 'Teacher, this is what I am reading today!' And the teacher will say, 'Oh, this is a good book.' And the teacher is encouraged to come. 'Miss Haywood, what you have in the library that will lend itself to the social studies lesson, or science lesson, or maths lesson that I am teaching?'

"With the Early Learners Programme training, teachers now see the importance of the library, and what they can do with the library to add to their classroom teaching."

Nicole Williams Francis

Librarian

Sandy Point Primary School

335 Students • Grades K to 6

Winner, 2015-2016 Hands Literacy Award

St. Kitts and Nevis

“Every year at the Sandy Point Primary School library we have a theme—this year is ‘Catch the Reading Express!’ That’s why, all day long, I am dressed like Thomas the Train. So everything that the children see in the library reflects our theme. They see trains, they see railroad cars with coals and words in them, they see books about trains on the shelves, and they are having a fabulous time because they are on The Reading Express. Previous themes so far were ‘Fish For a Good Book,’ ‘Leap Into a Good Book,’ and ‘Hibernate With a Good Book.’”

Our Library Atmosphere

“This is how we’ve made our library smart and welcoming. Our shelves were boring white, so we painted them bright green, an attractive, friendly color for the children. Another thing we do is to encourage our children to read: every year, we have a competition where they read books. This year, the children are reading over 25 books. You may say, ‘Well, that’s a lot!’ but it is for the whole year. So they started reading in September and they continue until the last school day in June.”

How We Assist Our Students with Reading

“How do we assist our children with reading? I read, and then they have to read. One week we may do library skills with that book. The next week, I read to all the classes from Kindergarten to Grade 6.

“We have a Creative Book Report competition, open for the entire school. One Grade 2 child chose *Clifford and the Big Storm* as her project. And she has all of the characters, she has lovely pictures, and she emerged second in



“The library is very, very important, because reading is in everything we do—in maths, science, social studies, language arts—we have to read! We encourage the parents to come on board, to let their children borrow books from the school library, to help their children with reading at home. I tell the parents: you will see your children improve, not only in the school library but in the classroom and everywhere they go.”



Nicole Williams Francis, librarian at Sandy Point Primary School on St. Kitts, in her Fish Costume and fishing for pre-schoolers during the “Fish for a Good Book” library theme

her category for this competition. We also had some Kindergartners doing creative book reports, and one Kindergarten child chose *The Old Woman Who Swallowed a Rose*. The report was really, really well done! Another child chose *The Poor Puppy*, and that was a good one as well. We also have a report on Albert Einstein, done by a teacher to show the children how they must present their creative book report. For all of our different competitions, we give all of the children rewards for participating—we let them know that they are doing a very good job, and that we appreciate what they are doing.”

Reaching Out to Pre-Schoolers

“Because we love reading and want to encourage children to read, we have invited the Sandy Point Preschool and the Nursery to join the

reading sessions in our library. It is really fun! The preschoolers come on Tuesday, the Nursery children on Friday. And as I read to them, I give them something so they are going to remember the book—I may be in costume, or acting out the story. We also provide a little snack, nothing big or expensive, just a little thing to let them know that we love them and we appreciate them.”

Reaching Out to the Community

“We also have a one-week Library Camp at the community center over Easter break—a reading camp to help our slow readers. I know you are thinking, ‘Only one week?’ But we do not want to wear out our teachers. We need them to rest, too. The teachers volunteer their time, and we have community volunteers coming in—we

provide snacks for everybody. ‘Mission Possible: Spy A Book!’ was our Library Camp theme. At Library Camp, we go on outings—last year, we took a trip to Nevis. It was really, really, really fun! We had friends over there provide lunch, and they took us on a tour of Nevis. and we spent some time by the beach and then we came back home in the night. The children had a fabulous time on the boat. For some of them, it was their first experience on a boat. So you can see how we are trying to help our children—not only read here at school but read everywhere. Everywhere they see words, we want them to try to read them as soon as they can. We really, really love what we do here.”

Literacy Week, Sandy Point Style

“At Sandy Point Primary we encourage our entire school to read, so we hold a Literacy Week—every teacher and student is involved. We had an opening ceremony. We had an *entire day* where everyone ‘Dropped Everything and Read’—the teachers had to run and get into character and go to a different class and read a story for the whole class. The teachers had fun, the children were engaged, and they loved it. We also had a Career Day, where the children dressed up as a character in a story, or maybe as a policeman, a fire officer, a nurse, a pilot, even as pastors. I dressed up in my Fish Costume, from our ‘Fish for a Good Book’ library theme.”

Reaching Out to Parents

“We also held a Library Opening to get the parents involved. The parents were invited to come in to read to a class, so and we told them: make reading a ‘family affair.’ Spend at least one hour where the entire family will sit together and read. In our annual Reading Competition, we encourage all parents to read. One parent won a prize—she read over 25 books! And of course, we rewarded her with something really, really nice. We encourage our teachers to read

as well—one teacher won a prize. She was encouraging her class to read, and she read over 16 books. All of the children in her class got a prize, because they were so encouraged by their teacher.

“One day was ‘Every Hero Has a Story’ day, where the children dressed as their favorite characters—we had superheroes, Spiderman, Batman, and some of the children dressed in their career day outfits, and we had a big parade through the streets of Sandy Point. In the afternoon, each grade dramatized a story from the library—it was lovely! We had a teacher who wrote a story about a butterfly, and the children did an awesome job dramatizing it. We had a wonderful time that week. We have encouraged other schools in St. Kitts and Nevis to hold a Literacy Week, too.”

What the Library Means to Our School

“The library is very important, because reading is in everything we do—in maths, science, social studies, language arts—we have to read! If we can’t read, we aren’t going to be able to follow the instructions. Reading is very, very important.

“When we have our PTA meetings, we encourage all parents to read. The Principal, Valarie Richardson Mason, is on board with me 110% —that’s how much she loves what we are doing with the library. She allows me to share with the parents the importance of reading with their children, and we encourage even the very early grades to borrow books (the younger children have to get permission from their parents, so that is why we speak to them in the PTA meetings). We encourage them—you read to your children, you assist them, and you are going to see them improve when they keep seeing the words over and over. They are going to be able to identify words everywhere they go—in the supermarket, on the bus.”



Charmaine Martin

Librarian

Willikies Primary School

71 Students • Grades K to 6

Antigua and Barbuda



“I’d been in the book business for 20 years—I used to work in a bookshop. So, in setting up the school library, I’ve put it together as if I am selling books. Display-wise, books are organized and displayed at eye-level according to the age of the child—they can see every book, nothing is hidden from them.

“Every so often I freshen up my book display, so the children can see that something that they haven’t noticed before. This helps, because sometimes the kids do have a little problem deciding, ‘O.K., what do I read today?’

“Or, something might be a bit boring for the children. Now and again I will read a few of the books so that I can say, ‘This is entertaining. I think you are missing something by not reading this book.’ And they will take my word for it and they will try it.”

Student Librarian Program

“I’ve started my Student Librarian program. We are not fully there yet, but so far, we are going good. We had a structure that we started out with, but what I realized is that the kids tend to come the day that they are available, so I work along with them and let them come in at their own convenience.

“We have our schedule posted, but we don’t normally follow it. When the children are available, when they want to be here, no problem. I’ll make use of them.”

Engaging the Teachers

“I try to get the teachers involved in seeing what we have in the library. We have our Reference section, and I let teachers know, ‘We have this, what topic are you teaching now?’ Just the other day, a teacher asked me for books on hygiene.

“Every school needs a library. With a book you can go places! You read a lot, you learn a lot. You can have a good conversation with anybody. A library is very important, because it is filled with books.”

We do have some reading books that talk about hygiene and how to take care of yourself. But sometimes a teacher may be looking for a bit more.

“The Agriculture Science teacher, who also teaches health and family life, is in the library almost every day, looking for something new. The Grade 3 teacher is here every day, if not by herself then with her children. For the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) program, if the children have already read their book, they exchange it for a fresh one. And then she asks them, ‘What was the story about?’ So, she knows for a fact that they are reading their book. If a child can’t retell the story, they need to go back and read the book. I also have teach-



ers who have not used the library as yet, but they do intend to come.

“With Grade K and Grade 1, I read a story to them. Or, depending on the day and the mood that they are in, the children may want to read to their class, or tell their class a story in a book they have read. So, I facilitate them with that.

“Whenever a child is reading and they find a word they are not familiar with, they ask me to tell them what the word is. So, you can see that they are really, really into the reading session.”

Why Our Library is Important to the School

“Every school needs a library. With a library in your school, I’m telling you, your kids cannot go wrong. It’s the place to be.

“A book is a good thing to curl up with. Lose yourself in that story. Oh! With that book you can go places! You read a lot, you learn a lot. You can have a good conversation with anybody. A library is very important, because it is filled with books.

“Every school needs a library!”

Valencia Daly

Literacy Coordinator

Villa Primary School

384 Students • Grades K to 6

Winner, 2012-2013 Hands Literacy Award

Antigua and Barbuda

“Our teachers are not using the library adequately.

I believe that this is because of previous practices. Before the library was introduced into the school, teachers just used their own resources, such as their class text. I believe that if the teachers use the library, fully utilize it, that will encourage the children to want to use the library, too. Because students see teachers as their great role models.

“Our teachers can assist our students in developing their reading by going to the library and getting different genres of books. They can take a chapter book from the library and present it to the students, and the children would be more motivated to go to the library to read books on their own.

“During a workshop, when an Early Learners Programme facilitator was showing us examples of how to teach reading, we were able to see how you can incorporate the material from the library to teach different reading skills to the children.”



“If teachers use the library, fully utilize it, that will encourage the children to want to use the library. Because students see teachers as their great role models.”

SHOP TALK Harriet Linskey, Hands Co-founder, and Lisa Tomlinson, Hands Literacy Link for Antigua, meet with educators at Villa Primary School, Antigua



Strategies and Advice from the Early Learners Programme

There are many books in your school library that can be used across the curriculum as anchor texts, read alouds, reference books, and more. The *Teachers Guide to the Library (Grades K - 3)* helps you find the right texts

for teaching according to the ELP model. The suggestions below, compiled from numerous ELP Coordinators and ELP workshops, will further help you utilize the resources in this guide to their full potential.



EARLY LEARNERS PROGRAMME Harriet Linskey, Hands Co-founder, with ELP Coordinators at Kingstown Preparatory School, St. Vincent

Kick Off the Term

Convene a library session at the beginning of each term where teachers explore this guide and the books featured in the book blurbs and lesson plans. It's a good way to find books that serve the needs of your term plan.

Stage a Read Aloud

Find a teacher who can demonstrate a read aloud in the library. Ask them to pick their favorite read aloud from their own lesson plan or from this guide, and go for it!

Grow Your Own

Continual creation of additional book blurbs and lesson plans from the library books can be done each term by teachers and library staff and added to this guide.

Share, Share, Share

Sharing lesson plans and ideas can help every teacher in a school succeed. Take some time as a staff to discover what texts are available in your library. And consider, for example, that if one teacher has created a Grade 1 lesson from a library book, could it be modified to serve as a Grade 3 lesson?

Bring the Library into Your Classroom

Don't isolate library time from the language block time or your teaching of other subjects. Language arts lessons and subject lessons can be enhanced by holding your lesson in the library, using a library book as an anchor text, or bringing library books back to your classroom to use during a particular unit.