

Library Themes Inspire Reading

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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At École St. Anne School we strive to fill our library with a variety of great books. Our selections range from colourful picture books, to dramatic mysteries, and fact filled non-fiction books. We take our time to seek out and purchase a variety of books for our students. The question is how to we inspire children to read all those carefully chosen books? What makes a child select a book they have never seen before? How do we encourage our students to revisit the classics? This year we have taken a themed approach to getting those books to fly off the shelves!

For our first foray into the world of themes in the library we chose the collected works of Dr. Seuss. New books were ordered in both English and French and promptly displayed on one of the main shelves. However, having the books visible to the students was only a small part of the solution. We got some students involved and turned our library into Seussville – A place with characters like the Cat in the Hat amidst his balancing act, the Lorax and his precious trees, Thing 1 and Thing 2 running across the wall, Sally and Conrad watching all the action and Seuss words wisdom prominently displayed on the wall. The transformation of our library had both students and teachers buzzing. We had their attention, so we decided to take it a step further.

We needed to bring Seuss out of the library and into the classrooms. To do so we partnered up with our teachers from kindergarten to grade 8 to create a Dr. Seuss binder filled with curriculum linked PowerPoint presentations, notebook files, activity sheets, online videos and grade level appropriate lesson ideas. In the end, the teachers from many grades in

both the English and French classrooms were able to utilize this fabulous resource and in doing so reintroduce these classics to a new generation.

Since then we have transformed our library a few times over. Seuss gave way to Emily Elizabeth and her big red dog Clifford, who was in turn swept away by the majestic beauty of a winter wonderland. With each new theme, we work with our teachers to introduce our students to a world of reading. And what do we have planned for this spring? We plan to lasso a new fun-filled theme of cowboys, rodeo, horses and the world of farming.

Although it has been a great joy to set up the displays, purchase new books and resources, the outcome of working with themes has been more far reaching than we thought. As teacher librarians, along with our library clerk, we have grown to truly know the collection in our library. We have been able to fill gaps, rediscover hidden gems and embrace new treasures. This has also been true for our teachers in all grade levels. Picture books have become a valuable resource not only in our early elementary grades, but also in the middle years classrooms. The students comment as they enter the library, and rush to the displays in excitement to explore new books and meet new characters. There is a growing awareness of the importance or usefulness of non-fiction books. Students are choosing to take them out simply for their enjoyment.

Themes have also helped to make our library a warmer and more inviting place to be within the school. Students and staff alike are always eager to find out what is new and available in the library. We have found that teachers, after working with us to use the themed resources in their classroom, are more comfortable asking us for advice and help planning lessons and units.

