

UHLS Youth Services Advisory Council

November 20, 2024

1:00 – 3:00, In-person at UHLS

Attendance (14): Lee Ricci (COLN), Liz Kurz (EGRN), Lindsey E. Musielak (APLM), Sarah Kerr-Mace (MEND), Sarah Russo (GUIL), Anita Wilson (PTRB), Meagan Salisbury (GRAF), Suzanne Cardinal (NASS), Carol Roberts(TROY), Julie Weston (VAFL), Kelly Akin (VAFL), Gail Brown (VOOR), Mary Fellows (UHLS), Amy Jeansonne (UHLS)

This month's theme/CE: Reaching and Supporting Upper Elementary Students Through Collections, Services and Programs, Marketing, and Spaces

“Glitter-braining”--What do we know about this generation of 8-11 year-olds?

Mary introduced us to this fun new term for brainstorming--inspired by a character in the book Free Period.

- **They like:** bracelets (Swifties), water bottles, stickers, converse sneakers are back
- **Slang:** “Ohio” means lame (and it’s fun to say) and “Skibidi” means good. Many haven’t taken up slang yet (or at least aren’t using it at the library).
- **Humor:** Bodily functions are still funny, though they can find almost anything funny.
- **Social and Emotional Life:** They can be resistant to our suggestions, though they also appreciate personal relationship buy-in with librarians. In-jokes can help with relationship building. Many are high energy and chatty and can wear their emotions on their sleeves, especially in groups. While 3rd graders may still be very open and unself-conscious, 5th graders are more self-conscious and developing more complex, nuanced friendships.

Guest Speaker: Tony Rivera, School Counselor, Blue Creek Elementary, North Colonie School District

Tony shared growth characteristics of 3rd-5th graders and discussed ways he works with and supports his students.

Characteristics

- 5th graders—going through a huge transition
 - They’re becoming involved in and focused on activities like sports and games.
 - They’re not thinking about relationships beyond friendships yet.
 - His focus with them is on SEL, communication skills, and navigating friendships
- 4th graders—
 - Are becoming better at managing their emotions, but can get to a “tipping point”
 - need guidance to develop tools and find language to navigate situations
 - we can model language
 - 4th and 5th graders, particularly boys, exhibit a lot of roughhousing, so addressing physical boundaries is important
- 3rd graders—
 - Self control is an issue he addresses
 - 3rd and 4th graders exhibit big differences among the group with some being very shy and some having more confidence
 - Some need help with confidence and self-advocacy

- example—Learning that if someone’s pronouncing your name wrong, it’s not rude to correct them, your name is important.

This age group is into: Roblox and other video games; Youtube videos, esp. cooking, video games, and Pokemon; Sports

His recommendations for working with this age group:

- **Small groups** (max of 5) are ideal for creating bonds and fostering a safe space.
 - Feeling safe is essential for learning.
 - He likes to mix up personalities within these groups in order to help them learn from each other’s strengths
 - They’re watching and want to **learn from their peers**.
 - As leaders emerge, they’re models for others.
- Provide opportunities for **nonverbal communication**
 - Ask for head nods and thumbs up.
 - Once they’re comfortable, they’ll start using one word answers, then more.
- Use “I noticed…” as a way to start an **open ended** check-in.
 - ex—“I noticed you were kind of quiet today, what’s going on?”
- This is an important age to work on **building good character** and practicing **communication skills**.
- **Bullying can emerge** at this age. Sometimes it’s even unintentional as kids test limits and “try on” power dynamics, so it’s important to help them define and identify it.
 - Uses acronym BOO: Being mean, On purpose, Over and over again

Our questions for him:

How can we address boundaries for our library groups?

- Post rules and expectations in a common place, even multiple places
- Model helpful language and behavior as needed
- This age group needs constant reminders, but once they get it they’ll begin to correct each other
 - This can improve buy-in and respect for the group

What are relationships with their families like?

- He sees a wide range of family dynamics.
- At this age, many start coming into conflicts over chores or feeling like their caregivers aren’t listening.
- He supports students by helping them learn to reframe.
 - Cognitive step from 3rd to 4th grade: 4th graders start to understand complexities. They can think more critically, connect facts with stories, and understand consequences both in the moment and in the future. Most 3rd graders still have more black and white thinking and can’t make connections like why bad behavior at school might warrant a consequence at home.
- For checking in with home
 - If student comes to him, he’ll ask their permission to follow up with home
 - He likes to encourage opportunities for conversation at home. Talking with parents can feel scary for 3rd-4th graders. Then 5th graders just don’t want to do it, especially if they haven’t in the past. He tries to coach them out of that because they’re still learning and growing.
 - Sometimes he will reach out directly to parents if a kid seems off in order to get more context, like if something happened in the household.

How do you recommend approaching kids' needs when we librarians don't get IEPs or similar information?

- Lead with compassion. Everyone has been through some kind of trauma/Trauma, and even small adversities can feel large to an individual.
- Students will pick up on your vibe.
- **Stay curious and ask questions in an open way.**
 - Openness builds trust in which they may share more specifics about their needs.

His final thoughts:

- Helping kids this age feel seen and heard can boost their spirits in meaningful ways.
 - One acknowledgement or positive word can “make or break” them.
- Librarians made a big difference in his life as a former kid in the foster care system.

Highlights from our follow-up discussion:

Favorite recommendation:

- We especially liked the idea of encouraging **nonverbal responses**
 - It was suggested that learning a few ASL signs can help with this as well as nonverbal and deaf children and their families.

Ways we've seen and put this information into practice:

- We've seen kids **test boundaries** and try on different personas or try to see what power feels like.
 - They're trying to figure out who they are. We know they're not necessarily trying to be bullies. Ex–Jerks get more attention, so they might act like jerks to test that out.
 - Look for opportunities to provide language and guidance in how to channel this
 - Try to spend the same amount of time on **positive behaviors** as negative behaviors, so they see that not just negative behaviors get attention
- We've noticed kids **correct each other's behavior**, such as foul language. They even seem to enjoy giving advice to other kids.
- They're seeking independence and respond well to opportunities to be acknowledged
 - Ex—if they can **teach adults something**, or have more **opportunities to choose** what happens
 - Ex–APLW has a weekly self-directed program in the makerspace and Lindsey feels like she often learns new skills from the participants. This makes them feel good and helps to create bonds.
- Our programming successes and suggestions:
 - **Recognize their autonomy:** Ex–librarian used “my child” as a general term of endearment to refer to a kid. The kid responded, “I'm not a child, my name is [so-and-so]”. Their family had been encouraging this as a way to help them show autonomy
 - Provide opportunities for **open-ended & self-led** activities
 - Set some parameters, but then let them figure out where they want to go with them
 - They like elaborate fantasy play, interactive games, rotating leaders, and cooperative goal-setting where participants work collaboratively toward a shared outcome.
- We witness a **wide range of more subtle emotions**, especially when dealing with peers
 - Maintain expectations: All feelings are welcome, all behaviors are not

Other thoughts:

- In New York state, librarians aren't mandated reporters.
 - Kids sometimes share heavy things with us, so it's useful to ask, **"What do you want me to do with this information?"**
 - Do they feel safe sharing it because you want us to share and do something about it, or because they feel safe in that we don't have to report it?
- Diffuse your frustration by reminding yourself that their prefrontal cortexes aren't fully formed yet.

The Big Idea: "Let kids do what they're capable of doing, guide and support them for the things they can almost do, and teach them what they are not yet ready to do on their own". (Mary's summary from [this article](#))

Best Library Practices for 3rd through 5th Graders

Mary presented ideas and we continued to discuss how we can improve the library experience for 8-10 yr olds. [Click here](#) for the presentation with visuals.

Spaces

We've seen how as kids near the tween phase, they can feel like they don't know where to go—too old for kidspace, too young for teen space.

- Mary shared ideas from [this article](#).
- Create a sense of anticipation - The journey and path to the children's area are just as important as the destination. Place items near the entrance that lead the way and give hints to what's in the children's section.
- Creating a centrally located **friendly service point** is especially important for this age. It can help them feel included and foster relationships.
 - Share with your staff the purpose of doing this.
 - Many customer service jobs make it a point to greet each customer. Even if they respond with body language that they don't want to engage, they've been **acknowledged**.
- Easy **access to collections** – Can they reach? Can they see the titles?
 - Provide stools and remember that bottom shelves are hard to access for kids too
 - Weed to avoid overstuffed shelves.
 - Face-out merchandising!
 - Have kids decide what to display. Ex-kid librarian of the week.
- **Offer refuge** within the building. Children need places where they can regroup to rest their eyes, their bodies, and their minds.
 - Ex—corners with soft seating, views to the outside, quiet area to study, cozy area to read, social space
 - Small library? Cozy reading times—bring in beanbag chairs, cushions, snacks
 - Ex at VAFL—a stairwell had enough space to place a beanbag in front of a window there. The kids love this spot for reading!
- Include **interactive elements** throughout the area, such as magnetic poetry, whiteboard or LEGO® walls, games, problem-solving activities, art
- Include age-appropriate and engaging décor on walls and endcaps.

- Mary showed us some ideas using slatwalls. Someone asked about the [cost of slatwalls](#).
- Display their art - UHLS has **easels you can borrow!**
- Hang art at their eye level
- Keep **signage current** so it's easy to find things.
- Decorate the ceiling! - Children are among the few who look up in a building.
- **Kids need to move.** Provide or identify a space where it's okay to do so; patios, interactive things outside, ex-outdoor percussion.

Programs and Services

- Offer paths to **pride and accomplishment**. Children thrive when accomplishments are visible and acknowledged. Celebrate milestones both in learning and life.
 - Ex-Opportunities for choice and to teach adults.
 - At GRAF, kids of this age are glad to help younger kids during lego club.
- Create a memorable experience by **engaging all the senses** —sight, smell, touch, hearing, and even taste. The more senses we use in a learning activity, the more we remember.
 - Positive memories will increase learning and the desire to return.
- Program ideas to support characteristics and growth at this age:
 - Self-directed [STEM stations](#) with “I wonder ...” statements to get kids thinking critically as they work with the materials - **UHLS has [tech kits](#)** and A/V equipment available to borrow.
 - Book clubs–
 - Adult-child: Pair recommending book brings the snack or leads the discussion.
 - Child only: Encourage participants to draw, write fanfiction, make food or anything else related to the book. Let participants come up with some or all of the discussion questions (and have some backup questions too).
 - Book club membership cards
 - Book-based art activities
 - Author visits–virtual visits or partnering with a school can make these budget-friendly
 - Scavenger hunts
 - Jigsaw puzzle contests
 - Food-related: country-centered, DIY with kit, bake-off, ugliest cookie, etc.
 - Stuffed-animal projects: [taxidermy](#) or [frankentoy](#)s, stage a rave or extreme sports and have teens help setup and take photos/videos. Could have a new theme each month.

Collections–Recommend Lists

- **Cooperative Children’s Book Center @ UW**–[Searchable database](#), has toggle for 3rd-5th grade–bookmark this one!
- **Boston Public Library**–[Staff Book lists](#)–Under “Kids”, lists are well labeled with themes and ages.
- [Children’s Book Council](#)–not as highly recommended for searchability, but still useful
- What **our kids** are reading–all kinds of graphic novels, Dragon Masters, Wings of Fire, Animal Crossing manga, new versions of Baby Sitters Club and Goosebumps, and they still like Magic Treehouse, Dav Pilkey series, and Wimpy Kid...

Marketing

- Kids between 8 and 10 seek **entertainment** and are becoming interested in **pop-culture**. Ethics of using characters is murky, but there are ways to reference favorite characters.
- Use photos in your marketing. Children, like adults, are interested in their peers and are engaged by faces and images that **show kids interacting**.
- Alternatively, an idea shared from NYLA was, if you have regular participants, have them make the marketing. Hand drawn is fine.
- Use your online spaces: Roblox, YouTube, TikTok...
 - See examples on [COLN's youtube channel](#)
- **Draw them in**– Create a popular children's library near the main service point with face-out books and child-friendly signage, inviting browsers to find more in the youth area.
- Use **digital signage** or digital photo frames to highlight upcoming programs and events.
- Remember who your marketing **audience is** – **kids and caregivers**.
 - At this age, an adult still has to get them there.

UHLS updates

SRH preview books are available! Request them like other kits by sending an email to bookit@uhls.org
More info [here](#).

Upcoming events:

- **Smart Program Risk Management: When Topics are Sensitive, [details linked here](#)**
 - Tuesday, 12/10, 10-11:30 am
 - Live webinar, will NOT be recorded
 - [register here](#)
- **YSAC Dec Meeting**
 - Tuesday, 12/17, 1:00-2:30 pm, Virtual,
 - Theme: Program Ideas
- **SRP 2025 Workshop**
 - In-person at COLN!
 - Full day, lunch included, look out for more details soon!

Questions, ideas, information for UHLS? As always, reach out to Mary...

Resource and Idea Sharing

We shared some of our current favorite books and program successes.

- *The Snatchabook* by Helen Docherty–fun for caregiver and child to read together at bedtime
- *Caves* by Nell Cross Beckerman, illustrated by Kalen Chock–great illustrations, nonfiction
- *Spooky Lakes* by Geo Rutherford–great illustrations, art and science connection

- author also has video content on [youtube](#) and Tiktok
- [Breya Observatory at Siena](#)—Dr. Mindy Townsend would love to work with you!
 - She recently created a program for EGRN about space trash
 - She’s put together a brochure for programs she can do to connect with the 2025 CSLP theme.
- Liz at EGRN has had fun running **kids trivia** sessions recently.
 - They shared the following resources:
 - [This is the answer sheets and rule cards that I put at all the tables for trivia.](#)
 - [This is the Trivia presentation I used for the first kids trivia night I hosted, and that I use as a base for other ones.](#) I would recommend finishing the design in Canva, but doing the effects in PowerPoint or Google Slides to make sure that text lines for answers are able to populate one at a time, so kids can shout out their answers before they pop up on screen.
 - They also said this was a great opportunity to build connections with this age and give them some of those opportunities for “pride and accomplishment” while making jokes and having fun.
 - They are also doing **Lego Printing** this week, so shared a resource for that:
 - [This is the handout I am giving to families at Lego Printing.](#) It is so they can take the concept and do more detailed or larger designs themselves, since they will only be making roughly 4inx5.5in cards in the program. I am also going to be going over a brief history and explanation of relief printing, since that is the method this uses!
- Reminder: If you have performers you think are worth others knowing about, let the performer know that Mary will forward one email or distribute 36 copies they provide of a flyer once a year per performer.

ARCs Available!

<http://reports.uhls.org/cgi-bin/staff/arc.pl>

(These ARCs cannot be added to your collection in any way.

By requesting ARCs, you are agreeing to give them to your kid, tween, or teen readers.)

Next Meeting: YSAC

Tuesday, Dec 17, 1:00-2:30 pm, Virtual

Upper Hudson Youth Services

Mary Fellows - 437-9880 x228 –mary.fellows@uhls.org

Amy Jeansonne - 437-9880 x231– ys.support@uhls.org