

UHLS Youth Services Advisory Council

November 14th, 2025

10:00-12:00, In person at UHLS

Attendance (13): Mary Fellows (UHLS), Caroline Purdy (UHLS), Gail Brown (VOOR), Suzanne Cardinal (NASS), Anita Wilson (PTRB), Meagan Salisbury (GRAF), Donna Riley (POES/NGRN), Lee Ricci (COLN), Lee Ackerman-Sawyer (WSTR), Julie Weston (VAFL), Elnora Baker (BETH), Lindsey Musielak (APLM), Josalyn Wilder (GUIL)

UHLS Updates

- SAIYL - Sexuality and Reproductive Health Grant
 - Grant is being extended
 - Mary discussed the opportunity for Planned Parenthood presentations at libraries (such as period parties)
 - Presentation is free, apply to UHLS for funding for other supplies through SAIYL
 - Sexuality and Reproductive Health Booklists Webpage (NEW; currently in draft form and not yet live)
 - Webpage will include recommended books with factual information on sexual and reproductive health, as well as fictional titles for tweens & teens depicting characters navigating these topics
 - Marketed to parents and teens as an opportunity to learn about and discuss sensitive topics - promoted through QR code flyers in libraries
 - This will be sponsored by UHLS (in all marketing and on the UHLS website)
 - UHLS can customize posters to suit your libraries needs
 - UHLS is purchasing the e-books (if they are available) for all titles listed
 - List includes title, author, and cover of each book - when patrons click on the cover, it will bring them to the item in the catalog
 - Booklist categories - Sorted by topic and recommended age range:
 - How babies begin (ages 2-9)
 - Bodies and consent (ages 3-7)
 - Bodies and consent (ages 8-12)
 - Puberty (ages 12-14)
 - Puberty (ages 12-18)
 - All kinds of families (ages 0-8)
 - Gender (ages 4-10)
 - LGBTQIA (various ages)
 - Strong LGBTQIA+ main characters (ages 8-12 and 12-18)
 - Periods (ages 9+)
 - Pregnancy (ages 14-18)
 - Drafts of the booklist posters for teens and parents were passed around
 - Questions and comments - Changes we would make? Ideas?:
 - Palm cards in the teen area with QR codes - could be offered to parents also
 - Bookmarks in parenting/teen sections or storytime room

- SRH books are often stolen due to reluctance to check them out, we will purchase any ebooks available in an attempt to prevent this
- Many books on the list are challenged/banned - can be used to promote free speech in the library
- Teen/tween poster - Dating/sex could be at the bottom of the list to make it less visible to parents
 - New titles have been added to the “Additions since booktalk” tab of the [SRH book list](#)
- Upcoming Workshops & Trainings
 - [Storytime Bootcamp](#) (click to register)
 - November 18th, 12-4:30 at UHLS, CE available
 - CSLP Summer Reading Planning Workshop
 - January 15th, 9:30-3:30 at Schenectady County Library
- Loanables & Collections Survey
 - Deadline today for the loanable items and rotating collections survey that Mary sent out to give your feedback on items you’d like to see featured.

Webinar Viewing and Discussion:

“Fostering Preschoolers’ Focus and Attention: The Pre-Internet Mindset”

Presented by Dr. Rebecca Rolland

- The focus of the presentation was on children reclaiming the ability to focus, connect, and think deeply amid constant digital stimulation - fostering attention, creativity, and authentic connection with a focus on conversations to build connections and engagement
- *Discussion question:* What’s the last time you saw a child in full focus? What was happening?
- Rebecca’s book: [The Art of Talking With Children \(request\)](#)
- Core principles of the pre-internet mindset:
 - Deep focus - sustained attention
 - Single-tasking - full engagement with one activity
 - Embodied connection - learning through physical and social interaction
 - Productive boredom - giving space for creativity and problem solving, allowing our minds to wander
- Reclaiming skills, not rejecting progress
- *Poll Question:* When do you feel most present with children?
 - Discussion:*
 - Talking with them, helping them problem solve
 - Helping them to find activities that don’t involve screen time, discussing with them one on one
- One on one conversations with children help them to feel like their voices matter and are heard. Try noticing: When do children lose themselves in an activity? → Sweet spot for cognitive growth
- Children are most engaged when there is an element of choice and autonomy, free of adult demands
- Outdoor play can boost learning
- *Discussion question:* When do you see children in their “flow?”
 - During storytime - asking children what they think. Allows them to feel proud to share their ideas and predictions

- Bird walks: Leads to opportunities for children to notice what is around them, high engagement, and allows them to share stories and connect with library staff
- Mary pointed out that flow often includes using all/most of your senses
- Superpowers of focus: cognitive growth, emotional skills, social bonds
- Executive function - Analogy: Moving from country roads to highways: When children are young, they have a winding way of thinking (country roads). We begin thinking about prioritization and efficiency, helping children inhibit their first responses and plan (highways)
- Mary highlighted - Everyone has a spectrum of executive functioning skills
 - Changes over time - it isn't you have them or you don't, you can grow and change, everyone has strengths and weaknesses
 - One participant added that librarians profession has changed immensely in terms of executive functioning requirements, librarians have evolved to properly navigate changes
- Research shows: Children with stronger attention skills and inhibition have been found to make larger gains in early math, language, and literacy as opposed to children who are weaker in these skills
 - Working memory and attention have proved to be predictors of achievement more than current math/literacy ability
- Rise in ADHD diagnoses for kids and adults - over 7 million children aged 3-17 were diagnosed
- Children need focus to build relationships
 - Environment shapes focus
 - Strong bonds help kids engage
- *Discussion* - In what situations might we want to help children shape the environment to promote focus?
 - Decor-wise, elementary environments are often busy, could prove to be distracting for children
 - Ambient music on the projector, lava lamp video to create a calming environment
 - Routine
 - Study skills
 - Teaching how to recognize overstimulation, strategies, providing options for breaks
- *Discussion* - How do we become more likable to children?
 - Smiling, eye contact, showing excitement
 - Showing interest in what they say
 - Find out their interests and comment on them when they come in
- *Discussion* - How do we pull students back to focus? How can we do this by harnessing their curiosity?
 - Instead of simply telling them information - Encourage children to brainstorm, use more language, and inquire of their peers
 - Asking open-ended questions, inviting a child to know or think more about the topic
 - Storytime is a unique opportunity for kids to ask questions, be curious, and allow conversation
 - Pausing when asked a question, ex. "let me think about that for a minute"
 - Allowing them to have processing time
- Asking questions promotes attention and focus, allows them to say and think more
 - Talking **with** children instead of at them - balancing conversation
 - Curious waiting - observing a child playing: ex. "tell me more about what you're doing"
- Executive functioning increases when children are progressively challenged. Can be promoted through modeling - showing them what paying attention looks and sounds like

- How might helping children focus help us better manage children becoming upset in the library? How can we help them focus so they can manage themselves?
 - Asking questions to refocus
 - Diverting their focus
 - Providing them with a space to calm down and talk
 - Handling curiosity from other children when others are upset
 - Move to another space
 - Focus on what is causing them to become upset, not conveying that they are in trouble. Show them their emotions are important
 - “You guys are so compassionate. (Child) needs a moment. We’ll take care of it”
- Without focus skills, children may have more meltdowns (ex. taking a break vs. hitting)
- For attention: Focus sprints, fidget tools
- For impulses: Pause prompts (nonverbal cues like touch cues), role play waiting through games
- For regulation: Designated reset spaces with sensory tools. emotional thermometers
- *Discussion*- What might this look like in the library?
 - Flexibility, refocusing, keeping structure in mind, incorporating movement
- Anchors of deep presence:
 - 1. Sensory grounding - notice 3 details in a child's face
 - Responsive silence: Wait 5-10 seconds after they speak → answers deepen
 - 2. Embodied engagement
 - When playing, mirror their body language first
- Actionable steps
 - Begin with a “tech audit:” Does this tech leave kids energized? Invite active thinking? Deepen relationships?
 - Showing a caring, authentic, attentive presence is extremely valuable

Mary’s Book Recommendations

- *The 13th Day of Christmas*
- *Dear Acorn, Love Oak*
- *Island Storm*
- *To Activate Space Portal Lift Here*
- *Why Did The Chicken Cross The Road?*
- *The Camel Library*
- *A Place For Us*

Resource and Idea Sharing

- Poestenkill is hosting their 4th annual Library lighting and Winter celebration - “Light up the library” on December 6th, 3:00-5:00. There will be 4 rooms set up: One for Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and nondenominational. In each room, a book is read by someone who celebrates that holiday, and there are 2 crafts and an activity. The library will provide a hot cocoa bar. The event provides an opportunity for cultural celebration and learning for the community.
- Book recommendations:

- *Gift of Words* by Peter Reynolds
- *The Boy Who Lived in A Shell* by John Himmelman
- *The Giant From Fire Sea* by John Himmelman
- *When I Move* by Carole Boston Weatherford
- *A Unicorn, A Dinosaur, and A Shark Walk Into A Book* by Jonathan Fenske
- *King Sorrow* by Joe Hill (adult)

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:

Find More Events, Trainings, & Resources

<https://www.uhls.org/youth-and-family-services/>

Upper Hudson Youth Services

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