

UHLS Youth Services Advisory Council

April 21st, 2026

1:00-3:00pm, In person at UHLS

Attendance (): Mary Fellows (UHLS), Caroline Purdy (UHLS), Gail Brown (VOOR), Suzanne Cardinal (NASS), Lee Ricci (COLN), Lee Ackerman-Sawyer (WSTR), Elnora Baker (BETH), Sarah Stanwicks (APLM), Sherry Bhatti (MEND), Hannah Rothman (APLP), Dan Barker (BETH), Amy McCarthy (EGRN), Rose Stuart (COLN), Bryana Wachowicz (GUIL). Carol Roberts (TROY)

Warm-up glitter-braining: Age group programming ideas

- **Preschool - Clouds:** Ploof (book), incorporating into scarf time
- **Lower elementary programming - Real/unusual animals:** axolotls, capybaras, cryptids, narwhals, sloths
- **Upper elementary - Secret languages:** pig latin, morse code, hieroglyphics, invisible ink, escape rooms
- **Tweens - Stunts & circuses:** slacklining, Stay (book), clown makeup, learn how stunts are done, working with animals
- **Teens - Learn to facepaint:** promote as a side gig, using stencils

Q&A with Literacy Specialist Katie Barker from Guilderland School District

- **What is the arc of teaching a child to read? What does a teacher start with? What differs between different grades? What do you find is the most helpful preparation for children in learning to read?**
 - Pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic, consolidated alphabetic, automatic
 - Cut the letter sounds short in order to help children avoid confusion (instead of sounding out “f” as “fuuuhh,” keep it very brief. This helps when kids are learning how to spell by sounding out letter sounds
 - Current strong focus in schools on students building words sooner than ever before
 - A+E sounds very similar to kids
 - At Guilderland schools: Goal by end of kindergarten that students have mastered reading and writing CVC words
 - 1st grade: focus on long vowel, silent E
 - 2nd grade: exposure to vowel teams (ee, ea) - irregular rules and exceptions lead to a need for exposure and memorization of certain words and r-controlled vowels
 - High-frequency words (decodable - a, and, big, came or irregular - are, been, come, could) are words that come up most often in print, sight words aim to help students memorize these words
 - Reading recovery
 - Changes in what works and what doesn’t in education are extremely frequent - what worked and was considered standard years ago are likely not what is being taught in classrooms today
 - Orthographic Mapping - readers use their oral language processing (known pronunciation and meaning) to anchor new, written words. By connecting the individual sounds (phonemes) to the letters (graphemes) that represent them, the brain “maps” the word
 - Words not seen as units by the brain, your brain is actually looking through each part
 - 3rd grade: “hypothesis” may not be mapped, whereas for adults we have it already mapped and don’t need to sound out the word to make sense of its meaning or pronunciation

- **How do teachers and reading specialists best catch reading problems/challenges early on so that a child can get the support to address concerns early before they progress?**
 - Dyslexia - racial and socioeconomic disparities in diagnosis and identification, those with reading difficulties struggle with working memory
 - If kids practice something wrong, it takes ten times as long to undo it. The more proactive you can be to prevent reading/writing mistakes from happening, the less correction and intervention they will require going forward
 - Children on the Autism spectrum - often excel in reading words aloud and struggle with comprehension (i.e. answering “what happened in what you just read?”)
 - Common red flag for reading struggles in young children - able to pronounce “cuh-ah-t” but can’t blend it into “Cat”
- **How can youth services public librarians best help and prepare families, caregivers and children in the pre-reading, early literacy years to put them on the road to reading success?**
 - Kindergarten teachers emphasize that before kids get to them, they should understand the basics of being a student in school (sitting down, listening, motor skill practice, following directions/routines, cutting, squeezing, gluing, holding a crayon/pencil)
 - Enforcing expectations, structure, and routines (children sitting down, taking turns, following directions, waiting to use a certain item) when children are in the library
 - When children come to kindergarten without some experience in these skills, teaching behavior overtakes teaching academic skills (reading, writing, math)
 - Librarians can encourage a welcoming environment where children and patrons are greeted - “hi, how are you, can I help you?”
 - promotes back and forth communication, increases vocabulary and oral language
 - Word play games
 - Blending (easiest to hardest)
 - Segmenting
 - Having a relationship with local school district
 - Activities to promote phonological awareness
 - Complete the rhyme in known text
 - Identify rhyming words in a text
 - Identify alliterative words in a text
 - Read books that play on the sounds in language
 - Songs that play on sounds in words
 - Willoughby, Walloughby
 - Down by the Bay,
 - The Name Game
 - Apples and Bananas
 - Nursery Rhymes
 - Sound sorting pictures or objects
 - Odd one out sorting
 - “What does not belong?” Games

- Anything that will help promote that rich oral language (1000 books before kindergarten is great for this)
 - Enrichment and fun
- **What exactly is a reading curriculum?**
 - Curriculum is what schools are doing (scope and sequence) in relation to state standards, programs are what they adopt as a “manual” and physically teach (some are scripted, provide the specific worksheets, books, etc.)
- Consider the difference between books that promote literacy skills vs. books that are entertaining:
 - Amelia Bedelia not written to be decodable, but written to have a fun story for kids to read
- Katie’s email for any questions you may have: barkerk@guilderlandschools.net

UHLS updates

- Interviews begin for YFS manager position this week, hope to have someone hired by early June
- 4/22 6:30-8:00 pm: patron facing UHLS You Can Do It, We Can Help training in collaboration with Planned Parenthood and Albany Med
 - Check out the [SAIYL project on UHLS website](#) for more SRH resources
- Borrow equipment for your programs from the UHLS [loanables page!](#)
 - Email bookit@uhls.org to reserve

Highlights of the review book list

- [Cat Nap](#) by Brian Lies
- [I’m Trying to Love Farts](#) by Bethany Barton
- [It Takes a Family to Serve](#) by Lisa Wheeler
- [The Moon Without Stars](#) by Chanel Miller

Best of Library Displays, Contests, and Bulletin Boards

- [Slides from BOCES Library System Showcase of Excellence](#)

Highlights from 60 Tips for Youth Services in 60 Minutes

- All libraries in a system, regardless of where they are located/who their patrons are belong to a larger host system
 - Library’s value is determined by the larger host system
- Three strategies for project management - Telescoping, microscoping, periscoping
- It’s all about relationships
 - Build organizational relationships outside your team
 - Build patron and community relationships
 - “Please let me know if you need help with anything” “Let me know if there’s something I can help you with”
 - Demonstrate interest in what they’re talking about, listening
 - Follow through
 - Demonstrate empathy
 - Be trustworthy

- **15 tips for inspired thinking -**

- Combine inspired thinking and regular thinking and weave them into life's activities to harness the benefits of both
- Embrace humor, optimism, and curiosity – cultivating and expanding inspired thinking
- Unlearn to make way for new learning such as examining problems as opportunities instead of threats
- “Let there be light” - illuminating quality of books and knowledge
- Follow leaders who recognize and were inspired by great thinkers
- Encourage people to think thoroughly and completely and make their own decisions
- Celebrate success in our libraries, communities, and lives
- Make great things possible by expanding the atmosphere of open-mindedness with an organizational can-do attitude
- Imagine a bright future for your library with more technology
- Understand that the expression of joy and unity can be a hi-tech, lo-tech, or no-tech experience
- Big ideas are within reach – harmony and forgiveness within ourselves, we discover their power within humanity
- Use discernment to help avoid knee-jerk decision-making to expand the realm of problem-solving and possibilities
- Practice goodwill. It is the life force that unites humanity
- Practice curiosity. It is a joyful call-to-action in expanding our awareness in order to become more effective
- Make the spirit of your welcome message to patrons this: The library is an open invitation to learning

Top tips from 25 Years: What I've (Mary) Learned

- Have your own mission (for yourself, your department, why you're doing it)
 - Helps remind you of why you're doing what you're doing.
- Focus. Learn to do one thing at a time. Batch work, so you're doing some of the same things at the same time, while limiting distractions.
- Do. Or do not. There is no “try.”
- Youth services is NOT the lowest rung on the ladder! Can't be fixed by whining, but by demonstrating value
- Be the leader you wish to see. Model the behavior you would like your boss to demonstrate. Don't engage in gossip. You may need to be more professional than those who are expected to be more professional than you at times.
- If needed, teach your boss.
 - Sign on display: Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind.
 - “So to be clear...” to help clarify as needed
 - Remember that bosses aren't perfect people, and we aren't perfect employees
- Work on emotional maturity (many books can speak to this!)
- Just say no to collaboration sometimes. Think about your own style and capacity. Think before you make employees collaborate on something. Think before you agree on organizational collaborations on things. Not every collaboration is a good collaboration. What will you not do because you're pouring effort into a collaboration?
- Invest time and money in your career (involvement with ALA, NYLA, committees)

- Improved knowledge in the field, helps you to bring ideas back your organization, networking, makes you feel less alone to be involved in something bigger
- Build relationships with other people
- Communicate relentlessly
- “Save the time of the reader, for it is valuable.” Save the time of the patron, but also coworkers and partners!
 - We do this for patrons with collection organization, how you help them find things, making emails more understandable/succinct
 - Do this for coworkers and partners in email. See: *Smart Brevity* by Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen and Roy Schwartz
- When work is really hard, consider the wisdom of Marc Manson: what pain do you want in your life? Everything involves sacrifice, or some kind of cost. Nothing is pleasurable or uplifting all of the time. What struggle or sacrifice are you willing to suffer with/tolerate? The answer to that determines our ability to stick with something we care about.
- When you feel burnt out or discouraged, remember that life cycles. Chances are, if you give it some time, you will get re-engaged with something and feel less discouraged. Talk to someone who can help remind you of why you enjoy the work you do
- “Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep need” - Frederick Buechner

Resource and Idea Sharing

- In response to a question: When a patron wants help with something, try to find a way to walk them through the process instead of purely doing it for them

Reminder: request Advance Reader Copies Copies from UHLS (to keep!) at

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

(If we have any, they will show up. Keep checking!)

Upper Hudson Youth Services

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

Caroline Purdy - 437-9880 x231– ys.support@uhls.org

Quote of the day:

“Years from now, you will forget all the details of the projects you worked on or the work that you did. You will remember the people and the relationships you built.”

-Michelle from Boomer Eco Crusader