

Professional Growth: VAASL Spring Regional Conference

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Keynote Speaker: Hettie Farley

The keynote speaker for the VAASL Spring Regional Conference was Mrs. Hettie Farley, Appalachian Storyteller. Hattie shared her love and passion for storytelling during her keynote message. She began storytelling over 15 years ago in schools, churches, and at festivals focusing on entertaining and igniting passion for those listening to tell their own stories. In her message she discussed many of the benefits of storytelling including the strong emotional connections that storytelling builds with listeners and the many literacy benefits including a deeper engagement than typical classroom read alouds. Storytelling inspires purposeful talking and not just about the story. For students, it can raise enthusiasm for reading texts to find stories and reread them. Storytelling can drive students to write and then want to tell the stories they write. It can build a sense of community in the classroom or library and improve listening skills. English-language learners get motivation from storytelling which could initiate speaking and writing in English. No matter the age, learning is a process and storytelling is a huge and important part of that process for many reasons. Storytelling is more than just entertainment. It is a powerful educational tool for the classroom or the library media center. Mrs. Hettie Farley's keynote speech was a great reminder to me that everyone loves a good story and storytelling is a great way for me as a future librarian to make connections with students and build relationships. Stories are also the perfect vehicles for teaching and learning.

Session 1: Integrating STEAM into a Whole School Experience By: Mary

Boardwine

I chose to attend this session because STEAM-based education teaches children more than science and math concepts. STEAM learning focuses on hands-on learning with real-world applications which will help develop a variety of skills sets, including creativity and 21st century skills for the high school students at my school. The focus on logical thought processes and problem-solving allows students to develop mental habits that will help them succeed in any field. This type of engagement challenges students to think critically and come up with their own solutions.

Mary Boardwine, presenter for this session began by discussing the reasoning behind this transition to STEAM learning at her school, Cloverdale Elementary. The goal of the program for them was to nurture an exploratory mindset and promote perspective learning. They took each concept being taught and added cross curricular concepts to enhance the learning experience for students. In addition they incorporated the learning framework to formulate questions from and then set goals for the lessons to be taught in the library media center. This transition at Cloverdale Elementary began in the 2018-2019 school year and just this year they have completely integrated the STEAM schedule for all grade levels. This includes 56, 40 minute STEAM classes to their instruction for the school year which translates into 37 hours of critical thinking! Most of the lessons she shared were literature based with a focus on cross curricular instruction. She described a typical 40 minute class to begin with reading a book focused on the key idea for the STEAM lesson, followed by a 15-20 minutes reading lesson, and then the STEAM activity or experiment. In this session I gained many ideas

that I could use in my library for STEAM lessons and ideas to share with my elementary colleagues including lessons using design process, engineering, coding, sequencing design, aerodynamics , upcycling and recycling, and environmental science.

Session 2: Though It Be But Little, It is Fierce. Making a Library that's Mighty even though its Measurements and Means are Mini By: Regina Libris

This session caught my attention with the catchy title and reminder that though my high school library is small in comparison and my budget leaves something to be desired, it can be mighty. The session presented an exploration of a small school library in a small rural school district, much like my own, and its evolution to improvement. The presenter, Regina, shared highlights from her quest to transform her school's library and offered tips on goal-setting, and space vetting, along with ideas for activities, decor, and more. She began the session by detailing how to get the best of the money we do have in our school budget. She highlighted several grant opportunities that she has used to fund some of the small items in her library. She discussed how picking a theme to highlight in the grant proposal, such as Resilience, leads to better output for funding opportunities. In addition, using statistics and data when proposing grants goes a long way. Integrating the community in another option for funding that seemed to help her library in addition to free help in the library with reorganization, repurposing, and redecorating. She shared lots of pictures of the transformation in her small, but mighty little library. I was inspired by her enthusiasm and left ready to make some changes in my own library.

Session 3: Creative Collaborations By: Angela Myers and Beth Cross

Research shows that partnerships between teacher-librarians and classroom teachers strengthens the quality of instruction, leads to higher levels of student skill development and increases the likelihood that students will transfer those skills outside the walls of the school library. As a new high school librarian, this session caught my attention because I need all the expertise I can get to develop better collaborative relationships and experiences with the classroom teachers at my school.

In this session I learned some innovative strategies to get teachers and students excited about writing and research. The presenters had lots of student examples of work on display and they even gave away door prizes. This presentation was very meaningful because one of the presenters was the teacher-librarian and the other presenter was the classroom teacher. They spoke throughout the presentation on their personal experience with collaboration . Learner interest matters! The key takeaway for me was to spark the students' interest by offering choice during the inquiry process and making it about something they enjoy. Student interest in a topic holds so much power. When a topic connects to what students like to do, engagement deepens as they willingly spend time thinking, dialoging, and creating ideas in meaningful ways.

Throughout this session, the presenters walked us through multiple collaborative inquiry lessons that they had actually done at their middle school. Students not only were writing, but they were completing project based assignments using different media such as podcasts, google slides, dramatic readings, movie trailers, book jackets, movies

using the green screen, and 3D character creations to name a few. This was my favorite presentation of the day with lots of takeaways to use in my high school library and to share with the teachers in my building.