

I Love My Librarian!
2011 Award

**NOMINATION FOR
Elizabeth “Betsy” Long**

Media Specialist
Doby's Mill Elementary School
Media Center
Lugoff, South Carolina

NOMINATED BY

Virginia Catoe
Lugoff, South Carolina

1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets him/her apart?

Enthusiasm, energy, advocacy, and collegiality are terms which exemplify the professional learning community Mrs. Elizabeth “Betsy” Long creates in our rural elementary public school library. Since our school’s opening in 2002 and despite continual public school budget woes, Mrs. Long has doubled our media collection from 6,000 to over 12,000 books utilizing school and grant funds! A Title I school, Mrs. Long provides literacy opportunities for each of our 600 students, their parents, and siblings daily; for our teachers, she is a leader in the field - always innovative, creative, and forward-thinking as she works diligently to link and skillfully target her media services to their classroom curriculum!

2. How has the nominee helped you and/or students at school? For example, did the nominee help you with a project, recommend resources or collaborate with you to enhance student learning?

Our school’s media center is literally the hub of the school, and every hallway leads to and from the media center. The locale of our media center is perfect in that our librarian, Mrs. Betsy Long, is the “center of attention” at our school. Each day, she utilizes her collaborative leadership and technology skills to assist students in developing their individual talents and pathways by creating programs and activities that foster and nurture their unique skills and goals. One colleague noted, “Mrs. Long is one of the most amazing people I know. She balances a well-organized media center, while orchestrating multiple student-centered learning activities. Mrs. Long always has the sunniest disposition and teaches more than what is required

by the curriculum. She is a fabulous role model for our students and for us. It is my pleasure to work with Mrs. Long.”

Mrs. Long consistently impacts student learning across the grade levels by collaborating with regular and special education teachers to integrate research, reference and literacy materials into standards-based instruction. Clearly, she is an instructional partner with her colleagues and creates an inviting learning space in the library media center where students seek and apply ideas and information to their lives. She makes it her priority to meet the needs of each and every student by planning appropriate, standards-based, age-appropriate lessons. She is an absolute ‘natural’ at working with children!

Mrs. Long daily collaborates with teachers to develop lessons that target South Carolina standards in language arts, social studies, science, and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards. She also works hard to obtain supplemental, online standards-based resources for teachers to use during instruction. For International Literacy Day each year, she coordinates literacy links with educators from other countries. This year’s event commemorates the anniversary of 9/11 and will feature a guest reader sharing Carmen Agra Deedy’s story of 14 Cows for America. For Veteran’s Day, she presents an interactive lesson for all third through fifth grade students that integrates by M.T. Raven’s, America’s White Table, numerous historical artifacts, and guest veteran speakers. This lesson successfully highlights many important points that are presented in the third through fifth grade South Carolina social studies standards. In addition, this lesson serves as a wonderful home-school connector, as we have a large number of military personnel and their families and veterans in attendance at our school. Each year, Mrs. Long recreates a visit to Ellis Island during the early 1900’s by organizing a memorable and meaningful reenactment in our media center for our fifth grade students.

Additionally, Mrs. Long arranges for a local South Carolina archeologist to visit with third graders and discuss the Native American history and their early technologies. Her collaborative nature and instructional initiative to assist with grade level projects certainly enhances the strenuous curriculum for our third grade students. At the conclusion of this project, Mrs. Long assists teachers in developing and assessing a research project on Native Americans, where students are required to utilize print and multi-media formats, integrating technology skills with their library research, to create and present a final product to showcase for their peers.

A highlight of each school year is working with our partner school, The International School of Ouagadougou, in Burkina Faso, Africa. Last year, Mrs. Long selected Mrs. Mary Catoe’s second grade students to pen pal with students from Burkina Faso by researching Africa and learning proper letter writing skills so they could effectively and properly communicate with their overseas friends. As a culminating activity in the spring of 2011, Mrs. Long facilitated by having these two classes of children make Flat Stanleys depicting their pictures to send to one another in an effort to promote international literacy. Our students received Flat Stanleys from

their African peers to take home over our Spring Break and kept a journal of their Spring Break adventures. Upon return from Spring Break, Mrs. Long planned a video-conference using Skype in which our students met and read poetry to their African pen pals. Mrs. Catoe's students truly enjoyed these activities with Mrs. Long, as they provided a true and meaningful extension to their classroom curriculum. Mrs. Catoe shared, "The project enhanced my students' understanding of the world around them!" Our principal, Mrs. Virginia Catoe, even participated taking her Flat Stanley on a Mexican cruise!

3. How does the nominee make the school a better place? Please be specific.

Mrs. Long personifies our school's motto: Catch the WAVE: Winning Attitudes and Visions of Excellence----with her contagiously positive attitude and innovative programs!

Daily, Mrs. Long creates an inviting school climate for our students in her media center! She welcomes students each morning as she co-hosts our school's closed circuit WAVE Show. Mrs. Long trains and leads our WAVE crew, a rotating group of students who produce and direct our morning show. Mrs. Long inspires this student-led crew by taking them on field trips to local television and radio studios. Our daily news show is projected through the internet into each classroom in our school, and her enthusiasm rings true as she highlights important announcements, special guests, and students, including our Weekly WAVE Writer. Following the WAVE show, she gathers her BrainSparks, a group of fourth and fifth grade students who did not meet standard on our state assessment. After reviewing assessment data, Mrs. Long organized a plan whereby she daily exercises with and mentors these children. Using John J. Ratey's research in *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* (2008), BrainSparks helps students build self-confidence while providing them with regular cardiovascular exercise (running, yoga, pilates, etc.) each morning to prepare them mentally, physically, and emotionally for their day. Her mentorship has assisted our school by reducing tardiness, improving attendance, and promoting on task behavior for this at-risk student group!

Even while creating all of these innovative programs for our students, Mrs. Long still manages to ensure that our media center operates on an "open check-out system," with students from all grade levels freely visiting the library throughout the week to select books for pleasure reading, to conduct independent research, or to work on small group assignments. Students visit the library as a class to learn of new literacy programs and events being sponsored through the media center. Some examples include an introduction to the South Carolina Children's Book Award and Nominee programs, National Children's Book Week, National Poetry Month, and International Literacy Day events. Quarterly, she organizes reading incentive celebrations to promote student participation in the media center's programs as well as reward student growth!

An avid runner, Mrs. Long develops and sponsors many programs at Doby's Mill Elementary that integrate literacy and fitness. WALK, Race to Read, BrainSparks, You Go, Girl, Family Reading/Walking Nights, and History Hounds are a few of the programs that she sponsors for our school. It is clearly evident that she cares about the health and well-being of students' minds and bodies so that they can better navigate and determine their pathways to their success!

Mrs. Long's media center is the porthole to the 21st century learner. In fact, she is a proponent and supporter of a local movement, Literacy 2030, to offer feedback and share plans which examine how our county can eradicate illiteracy by 2030! Not only does she provide educational experiences for students, but she is knowledgeable of adult learning research and ensures that her colleagues develop information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, visual literacy, and technology literacy. "The mission of our DME School Library Media Center is to provide all members of our community with print and non-print resources necessary to become informed, productive citizens who are independent readers, life-long learners and responsible consumers and producers of ideas and information." Using a wide variety of technology, such as iTouches, iPods, Kindles, Interactive Whiteboards and accessories, Facebook, websites, vodcasts, podcasts, blogs, VoiceThreads, and even Smartphones and Wii gaming systems, Mrs. Long links academic subject content with technology skills to promote inquiry, research, and reading. She has even designed a Quick Response (QR) that when downloaded using a QR reader app will link a visitor to the DME Library Media Center website! Likewise, she includes QR codes inside the covers of some of the library books; for instance, *Testing the Ice: A True Story About Jackie Robinson* has a QR code that links to the official Jackie Robinson website! She also maintains a Facebook page for the Doby's Mill Elementary School Media Center.

In compiling this recommendation for submission, colleagues and students reflected on how Mrs. Long makes our school a better place. Some of their feedback follows:

- "Mrs. Long makes our school a better place by encouraging students to not only be avid readers, but to develop personal interests. Mrs. Long strikes a match inside students with her enthusiasm, encouraging students to discover their personal passion for history, fitness, technology, and the environment."
- "Mrs. Long goes above and beyond the call of duty for our students, faculty, and community. Her zest and love of learning and education is contagious!"

Second grader, Zane, summed up, "Mrs. Long helps me learn to read. She helps me find books that I can read and makes reading fun!"

4. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and the learning process?

Mrs. Long partners with teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and, most importantly, students, to create, instruct, and assess daily learning experiences which positively impact student performance. Notably, Mrs. Long creates alternative, innovative programs in an effort to tailor curriculum to individual learning styles, to enhance our school's family-friendly environment, and to promote high expectations for all students. Highlighted are some of her projects:

- **Family Reading Nights** – These wildly popular monthly events allow families to visit the media center in the evening to read together and check out books to read at home. As this event has increased in size, she has extended the reading area to our school's Rotunda and surrounding hallways of the library. It is quite a sight to see children and their parents cuddled up with a good book, reading in the nooks and crannies of our school! Mrs. Long also partners with our School Improvement Council (SIC) to make Family Reading Nights "No Homework Nights," which allows more families to attend these events without having to worry about the responsibilities of homework for the evening. During the 2010-2011 year, the average participation of Family Reading Nights was over fifty parents and students each month!
- **History Hounds Fourth Grade Book Club** – After analyzing the school's 2010 Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) test data, Mrs. Long developed this book club for fourth grade students who scored Met, but very close to Exemplary on their third grade social studies subtest. This group of students reads historical fiction and non-fiction books that relate to the fourth grade social studies curriculum. Since these students already have a natural interest in history and reading, they are challenged to read a common book or novel and be prepared to discuss the content of the book at monthly club meetings. The goal of this club is to increase these students' interest and knowledge in historical topics, ultimately resulting in increased PASS scores for the 2011 test administration. During the 2010-2011 school term, she secured funding through a grant to receive a set of Kindles. Using these wireless reading devices, students select from a digital library of historical fiction and non-fiction titles related to the topics they are learning in their social studies classes. The introduction of this digital media promotes enthusiasm and increased student participation and success in the program!
- **W.A.L.K. (We Are Literate Kids)** – After noticing students forego recess time to come to the library to read, Mrs. Long created this program which combines the life-long skills of literacy and exercise. In the W.A.L.K. program, second through fifth grade students check out Apple iPod's loaded with audio-books during recess and walk on our fitness trail with Mrs. Long. Two grants written by Mrs. Long allowed the purchase of the iPods and audio-books. Initially, the program's purpose was to alleviate a problem that Mrs. Long noticed in the media center. Often, children

would opt to skip recess so that they could come to the media center and read. While she did not want to discourage their love of reading, she worried about their lack of physical activity. As an alternative to please those children who so loved to read, she developed this program. To her great surprise, in addition to appealing to that initial target group of children, she has also attracted students who never would have skipped recess to read before. Approximately 28 students participate monthly in this club. Teachers and students are thrilled with this new technology and how it incorporates literature with exercise. Adalae Gillis, former DME student said, “It was so much fun to spend my recess time walking and listening at the same time. I liked being able to use the pedometer and the iPod together. It’s better than just sitting and reading!”

- An avid runner, Mrs. Long started the “You Go, Girl” (YGG) running club during the 2009-2010 school year for fourth grade girls. Wildly popular, YGG, a voluntary running club that encourages young females to exercise, set goals, and strive to meet them, has expanded to include participants in grades 3-5. Overall, the goal of the club is to develop healthy habits, to build self-confidence, and to promote a sense of accomplishment. The 65 members and their faculty and parent mentors practice each Thursday afternoon and participate in local races, such as the Jingle Bell Run (Kershaw County Youth Initiatives), the Race to Read (Kershaw County Libraries), Springdale at Sunset (United Way), Providence Hospital Heart and Sole (heart disease in women) and the Ray Tanner Home Run (Ray Tanner Foundation) to support local community charities. Again, through her mentorship, she goes above and beyond the call of duty to create opportunities to inspire and encourage students to stay physically active. Her motto - “Healthy students learn better!” – rings true in all she does!

5. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the school community?

Mrs. Long has served as Doby’s Mill Elementary School’s Media Specialist since 2002, when she was hired to open our new school’s media center. She literally breathed life into and has created a media center where children are encouraged to take risks and explore their interests. She demonstrates the highest level of commitment and competency as she often works before the school day begins, after it ends, and on the weekends to create these innovative programs. A true advocate for literacy, she works hard at her job, and it is evident how much she enjoys her work. Her leadership in our school community is evident with her annual Race to Read!

When our local branch of the county library opened in rural Elgin, South Carolina, she spearheaded fundraising efforts to enhance its children’s literacy section, especially since this branch was the closest after school hours means for many families to access literature and media sources. Thus, each October, Mrs. Long sponsors the Race to Read. What initially began as a one mile fun run/walk now has grown into a USATF-sanctioned 8K race. Since 2005, hundreds of participants

have raced for literacy, including our district Superintendent, and over \$2100.00 has been raised to benefit the Kershaw County Public Library (KCPL). Annually, the proceeds are presented to the KCPL administrators during one of our school's Family Reading Nights!

Obviously, her desire to promote literacy, her passionate advocacy of public education, and her enthusiastic approach to integrating literacy and physical fitness initiatives makes her a true leader in our community! In fact, in 2008, she was recommended to participate in the South Carolina State Department of Education's Foundations of School Leadership (FSL) Program because of her natural leadership abilities. In 2007, she was named the S.C. Media Specialist of the Year.

Clearly, Mrs. Betsy Long is an outstanding young librarian who does the profession proud. She demonstrates the highest level of commitment and competency, and she is devoted to serving our students, faculty, and community. Mrs. Long has written and received four EIA grants in the past five years; has published articles in professional education magazines, such as *The Media Messenger*; is a certified PBS TeacherLine Online course facilitator; has presented at the annual SC Association of School Librarians (SCASL) conference; mentors student teachers from the University of South Carolina Library Science Department; serves as the school's technology liaison; and has won a "Champions of the Environment" grant. She has served four years as treasurer of the Kershaw County Reading Association, a local chapter of the International Reading Association. Mrs. Long has completed her Masters +30 in the area of Library Science. She has also completed two Teaching American History graduate classes which promote the use of primary sources in teaching history. These courses inspired her to write a grant for a local history project documenting oral histories and historical events. She is constantly in search of programs and classes to expand her knowledge. She offers "Teacher Techie Time" during our "Tackle Monday" staff meetings. In addition, she offers more in-depth, after-school sessions for teachers who are interested in learning more about particular instructional technology resources.

The teachers at our school revere Mrs. Long and know that she is a willing, able, and dependable resource. Mrs. Mills, our EMD teacher, stated, "Mrs. Long is an awesome Media Specialist. She is exceptional in the way that she meets the needs of each and every student in my class. I love her flexibility and the way she accommodates my students' needs in every lesson." By working closely with the special education teachers, Mrs. Long ensures that student learning goals are mastered and that these students truly feel included in their school's curricular and incentive programs.

We cannot imagine a candidate more qualified and deserving of this honor. In the ten years that our school has been open, she has created a library media center that helps students think critically, share their knowledge, create new information, and grow individually. Teachers and media specialists state-wide utilize Mrs. Long as a resource for her leadership and knowledge. In recent years, despite the budget

shortfalls in public education, Mrs. Long sought advocacy avenues contacting local and state legislators, speaking at board meetings, attending lobbying events, and spearheading letter writing campaigns to voice concerns over financial cuts to school media center personnel and budgets. Every school administrator should be so blessed to have an instructional leader who is openly willing and enthusiastic about collaborating with others to broaden and deepen their understanding of topics. Intelligent, personable, caring, and creative, Mrs. Long is an invaluable asset to Doby's Mill Elementary School and our community thus making her the perfect nominee for this award! It's clearly evident that the Dolphins of Doby's Mill Elementary "Love our Librarian!"