

I Love My Librarian!

2010 Award

Nomination for Kelley I. McDaniel
King Middle School
Portland, Maine

Nominator:
Hiram Sibley
Portland, Maine

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

As is so often the case with genius, many of Kelley McDaniel's ideas and innovations seem so obvious once they are put into action. Visitors to King Middle react by asking "Why doesn't everyone do things this way?" I sometimes ask myself "Why didn't I think of that?". The answer to both questions is that the rest of us are not Kelley McDaniel. Kelley is the most committed, able and innovative school librarian that I have ever been around.

2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and made your experience of the library a positive one. For instance, did the nominee inspire in you a love for literature; assist you in a project or finding other information?

If I start listing all of the projects that Kelley has helped me with, we could be here for a very long time. The thing about Kelley is that she is not only a great source of information, she is also highly skilled at planning projects and activities.

Kelley combines great organizational skills with a flair for constructing engaging events and activities. On top of those two qualities, she has the kind of passion for her work that only the very educators have. Kelley puts forth an exceptional effort every single day, and so has come to be relied upon by students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members.

Kelley has been a great asset for me over the 10 years that I have known her. She has been a great sounding board, and a source of insight over the years. Kelley has a talent for anticipating organizational issue, and holds more information about what is going on in the various school houses than perhaps anyone else.

Kelley also makes a difference in the lives of students. First and foremost, she reframes how students think about themselves. When Kelley is around, everyone is a reader. It is just a matter of finding the right books to read. Beyond that, though, Kelley finds interesting and meaningful projects for students to work on, both as part of their core academic studies and as additional opportunities. Through this work, she develops

enduring relationships with students. It is not at all unusual to find high school students returning to King to talk to Kelley, or even to help out in the library.

Kelley also has a special role with local writers, illustrators and book stores. She has created a network that supports, encourages and celebrates these people. The pay off for our school is that we have a constant stream of working writers interacting with our students, and important relationships with local book stores.

3. How has the librarian made a difference in the community? Please be specific.

King Middle is one of the eight original Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound schools. We have been a demonstration school for ELOB as they have grown the national network to over 150 schools. We engage students in twelve-week inter-disciplinary learning expeditions with authentic problems, authentic research and fieldwork, authentic products, and authentic audiences. We also host hundreds of visitors every year who come to see what makes our model work. Mastery of content and pedagogy are the norm for our teachers. A high level of drive and willingness to go public with our work is expected. The ability to reflect on, and refine, one's practice is required.

In the midst of all of this, Kelley thrives. In addition to running a truly first rate middle school library, Kelley supports the learning expeditions in a number of roles, teaches research skills to students, contributes to school wide professional development efforts, and perhaps most importantly, models excellence for the staff.

The mission statement in the King library is "Inspiring students to be lifelong readers, lifelong learners, lifelong library users and engaged citizens". To accomplish this mission, Kelley develops student ownership of the school library program. Somehow she manages to train and engage four to five dozen student library aides each year, many of whom go on to work as Pages at the local public library. One of the great features of being a library aide is that they go shopping each year to select books to add the school library collection. The aides review the books they choose and display their reviews with the new books when they go on display.

Student needs inform changes in library practice. Kelley has developed and refined a genre organization of fiction that makes intuitive sense for students. She has also found ways to offer after school hours and summer hours by being flexible with her own hours, donating time, and fundraising.

Kelley believes that making the library a welcoming and inviting place for all members of the school community is vital. She hosts "Thanks-a-Latte" days two or three times per year. During "Latte", the library is set up like a café. Student musicians perform, and new library materials are displayed. Every student drops by for a 20 minute visit to see what's new, buy a \$.50 snack and/or drink, soak up the atmosphere and reserve one of the new books. Kelley's cadre of parent volunteers bake and staff the event with her. Kelley has changed the way we address overdue. She holds "Library Appreciation Days" at the end of each trimester where students and staff stop by the library and say "Check My Record". If the patron's record is clear his/her name goes into a drawing for a gift certificate.

The following is a testimonial offered by a member of the King Library Community.

Kelley makes the library the hub of the school, in many remarkable ways.

First, she brings in authors and illustrators so students can meet the people behind their favorite books, and they can picture themselves someday being book makers.

Kelley also makes room for students to make their own books; the library is also the art room on many occasions.

She doesn't just talk about books, she celebrates them, with special events, like the time she played classical music and offered sparkling cider in champagne glasses while favorite poetry books were featured and read. Classy fun!

She organized a zine making workshop for teachers. Everyone had a chance to make a statement and publish it, so that teachers can lead students in the same act of crafting their ideas in tangible form.

She gathers groups to discuss worthy books, ones students might not ever pick up, but discover by participation and dialogue. In particular, the book group that formed around Phil Hoose's book about Claudette Colvin went on to work with MECA art ed students, creating posters for the City Metro buses about equality. Now that's getting books out of the library, and changing the community.

She brings students regularly to author events at the Public Library, marching them there during rain or shine, because she knows these encounters are important, where readers meet writers and get the back story.

Kelley is passionate about the power of books, their ability to transform readers, and she walks the talk by making the library a dynamic place to foster vision and voice.

-- Jamie Hogan
Illustrator & King Parent

4. How has the library, and the nominee, improved the quality of your life?

Kelley inspires teachers to incorporate new literature, curriculum ideas, and other resources into learning expeditions. She hosts interactive author visits; she gets graphic novels, picture books, and audiobooks into kids' hands; she organizes walking tours and book passes; and she teaches both staff and students how to effectively access online databases such as Discovery Education Streaming, CultureGrams Online, and Teen Health and Wellness. Student Adam Campbell states that the King library is a vast sea of knowledge with Ms. McDaniel leading the ship.

All of the library special programming is accessible to ALL students. A few examples are the Get Graphic! project; Spring Into Poetry project; After Gandhi project; Understanding Courage: Claudette Colvin project; Bamboo People project; Civil War Sesquicentennial project, and special opening night movie events that tie into movies made from books that are popular in middle schools. Social studies teacher Carol Nylén says "Kelley has done an incredible job making the library relevant, current, inviting, and kid-friendly. The atmosphere in there after school or any time during the day is one of acceptance and invitation. Our library is the heart of our school."

Kelley developed a reading incentive program that encourages students to stretch their reading muscles: if they read ten books from ten different genres each trimester they get an invitation to an ice cream sundae celebration at the end of the trimester.

Kelley created and runs the King Summer Reading Program. She puts together a Suggested Summer Reading list of "best books in youth publishing" and visits fifth grade classes (in half a dozen different schools) to promote summer reading. She also has individual reading consultations. Part of what makes these approaches so successful is that Kelley herself is so enthusiastic about literature. She follows the publishing trade carefully, and is extremely well read.

Student Jane Ackermann states, "The Library atmosphere is non-chaotic and welcoming. The library is a great place to learn because it reflects the student body in the culture of the books and of learning styles."

Language arts teacher Lisa Hatch says that "Kelley has made the school a better place because she has created opportunities for students. She takes students traveling out of state, shopping in the Old Port or to meet people to enhance their learning."

"Kelley has increased student learning in the library by making the library another classroom. My students visit the library on a regular basis whether it is being educated on library protocol, researching or an author visit. The library is a happening place."

5. How does the nominee make the library a better place?

Kelley contributes to school-wide professional development work on a regular basis. Not only does Kelley bring meaningful information and useful pedagogical strategies to our staff meetings, she also facilitates debrief sessions for expedition planning and reviews.

Kelley is also an important advocate for students with the staff. Kelley encourages the staff to consider multiple perspectives, and to examine equity issues as they relate to their own practice.

Kelley has contributed leadership in a number of other ways. To encourage use of under-used collections, she has hosted special events such as an event for math teachers featuring math books for students and teachers, and a "Poetry Tasting" event, featuring poetry books and posters of teachers' favorite poems. Kelley makes these events a big deal, with special decorations, topical music, and touches like ginger ale in plastic champagne glasses.

Kelley engages teachers with learning in authentic ways. Social studies teacher Carol Nylen adds that "Kelley has brought nationally and locally renowned people to King. I was fortunate to go TO Boston for an author visit (Mitali Perkins, Bamboo People) that she put on last year, and it was INCREDIBLY well organized, to the minute. I loved it. I don't think that there isn't an idea that she won't consider when it comes to text, students, or authors."

Kelley helps us make good use of our resources in a number of ways. She collected under-used class sets of books from classrooms, established a collection of book sets, and catalogued and organized a printed/bound annotated list of book sets for teachers for King and for district teachers.

She created a read aloud collection for teachers to use for the 10-minute read aloud at the beginning of each SSR class. She created multilingual and leveled reader collections to better serve our ELL populations.

Kelley has worked out a deal with the local newspaper where she gets the daily paper into classrooms free of charge, and has her library aides deliver the newspapers before school each day.

To stretch technology budgets, she joint-purchases computer projects with classroom teachers enabling the school to purchase twice as many LCD projectors each year. Kelley has contributed to the purchase of 20 projectors to date, enabling us to have more projectors than any other school in the district.

Kelley is an expert on privacy, copyright and intellectual freedom. She has helped teachers and administrators deal with challenges and potential challenges, and served on district internet filtering committee.

In ten years has applied for and received almost \$20,000 in grants to purchase new materials and fund special programs.

Kelley also lives her values. She models lifelong learning for students, and shares her excitement about her interests. In spite of what she termed "extreme nervousness", she performed in our faculty talent show/fundraiser, playing the Appalachian dulcimer last year, and created a Civil War themed monologue for a previous talent show.

In closing, here is a story from Author Anne Sibley O'Brien, that will serve as a case study in the impact that Kelley has on our community.

When a local mother-son team of authors contacted her with a request to meet with students to discuss a work-in-progress, a nonfiction book about Gandhi-style nonviolent resistance, Kelley McDaniel saw a larger opportunity.

She masterminded a year-long project to involve a group of students in the process of producing a book and got it funded by a small grant. Thirteen highly motivated students responded to Kelley's invitation and formed a focus group they called "Gandhi Publishing." The group met with the authors in a workshop/discussion setting, four times over the course of the book's production, offering substantive input on the book's concept and content, writing style, and design. Their comments and suggestions influenced the development of the book in significant ways. When *After Gandhi: One Hundred Years of Nonviolent Resistance* (AfterGandhi.com) was published, the students, to whom the book is dedicated, were invited to the launch party where they each received a copy of the book.

This example of imagination, innovation, and the ability to make things happen is typical of Kelley McDaniel's work. She is constantly looking for and creating opportunities for students to be involved in real-life experiences that matter, honor and challenge their intelligence, ideas and skills, and engage them in the wider community. She is a fierce advocate for her students, passionate about what students have to give the world and what the world has to give them.