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<u>My HLA Experience & Takeaways</u>

As a conference attendee, my primary goal was to learn more about the programming ideas and experiences of other Children's Librarians in the Hawai'i State Public Library System. To achieve this goal, I attended two Saturday sessions provided by Kahuku Public & School Librarians Tamara King and Lea Domingo.

Books, Battles, and Buzzers: How Friendly Competition Fuels Motivation

Tamara's first session covered her experiences with putting together the library's first *Battle of the Books* competition, as well as the outcomes. While the Kahuku competition stems from the national *America's Battle of the Books* (http://www.battleofthebooks.org/) reading incentive program, Tamara and her planning committee adapted it to include younger students from 1st and 2nd grade, as well as local literature. From Tamara's account, the entire experience seems to be a fun and inclusive community celebration of literacy, knowledge, and friendly-competition.

Opportunities

Some opportunities that this competition seems to present to user communities are: 1) socializing through reading; 2) building a stronger connection between the community and the library; and 3) creating an association between fun, literacy, and learning from elementary through middle school (and, possibly, up into high school).

Socialization through reading fosters friendships not just among classmates, but among children who attend different schools, including homeschool students. I found the parent, teacher, and staff volunteer involvement to be a noteworthy achievement. This kind of large-scale collaboration is challenging to sustain, and I'm proud of Tamara and her planning committee for working together successfully to offer the keiki and 'ohana of their user community a new and exciting reader experience. The friendly-competition, getting together with peers to train, reading a list of selected quality titles, the big ceremony, and the prizes are all factors that contribute to an association between fun, literacy, and learning. I could imagine a competition like this appealing to these same children as they grow into their high school years, and perhaps, beyond that. It would be interesting to consider a read-and-compete model like this for a whole new kind of HSPLS Summer Reading Program experience, one that goes

beyond incentives, addresses reading comprehension, and fosters new connections in the community.

Challenges

Some challenges that this competition seems to present to user communities are: 1) large-scale organization; and 2) consistent replication across the state library system.

Large-scale organization requires quality leaders that are motivated to deal with the ups and downs of organizing and managing such a large number of volunteers in order to make the competition possible. It also requires time and focus that are already precious and limited resources among regular librarian duties, not to mention funding for the competition itself. I think the opportunities of this reading competition make it worth considering for statewide duplication, but if we were to offer all HSPLS patrons this new and exciting reader experience, how would we go about it?

The Birth of Cool: How Kahuku Public and School Library is Leading the Way for Makerspaces and STEAM Programming in the Hawaiʻi State Public Library System

Tamara's and Lea's shared session covered their branch's experiences with operating the Kahuku Cool Lab, the library system's first makerspace. The lab operates as a place for creativity, which hosts a variety of tools for self-service (i.e.: a button maker), as well as a place for learning via programming, including STEAM camps for children. In addition to the in-house space, Tamara and Lea also offer relatively inexpensive STEAM kits for checkout so that patrons can enjoy creative learning experiences outside of the library.

Opportunities

Some opportunities that the makerspace seems to present to user communities are: 1) a free and accessible creative learning space that appeals to a variety of users; 2) an extracurricular learning space to promote life-long learning; and 3) a modern learning space that appeals to 21st Century learners.

The makerspace is a unique creative learning space in that its tools and programming are accessible to a general audience at no cost to users. I like that Tamara and Lea started their project by identifying potential users of the space, and stocked it accordingly. The variety of users includes patrons of all ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds, from homemakers to entrepreneurs. Because it's a space that appeals to all ages and features tools and programming based on community interest that can be adapted to keep up with evolving community interest, it also promotes life-long learning, life-long learning that includes hands-on learning, which is an atypical style of learning when people think about traditional libraries. A

makerspace also provides the general public with exposure to 21st Century learning skills that help us to rebrand our library system as modern and relevant in the Digital Age.

Challenges

Some challenges that the makerspace seems to present to user communities are: 1) the availability of resources; 2) scheduling issues; and 3) the damage and loss of makerspace tools and take-home STEAM kits.

I like that Tamara and Lea prefaced their presentation with the words, "Think Big, Start Small". When I think of a makerspace, I think of big, expensive machines. Tamara and Lea provided a model that's relatively inexpensive, but resources, such as funding and educators for the space, are still of concern when considering reduplication in other HSPLS branches. One issue that Tamara and Lea brought up was keeping the space staffed at all times, which is again difficult since staff already have daily duties that they need to keep up with. While I enjoy the thought of patrons being provided with the free use of expensive tools, and sending patrons home with STEAM kits, I also cringe at the thought of these tools and kits being damaged. Granted, with proper monitoring of the makerspace, damages to in-house tools should be preventable, and patrons can always sign a waiver agreeing to pay a fine to completely replace damaged take-home STEAM kits. Overall, I think the makerspace model established by Tamara and Lea is worth considering for statewide reduplication, keeping in mind that spaces, their tools, and their accessibility will be unique to the staff that provides access to them and the communities that they serve.