Getting Started with Connected Learning

by Gail Sheldon

Getting Started

For all of my library career, I have worked toward developing programs, opportunities, and environments where teens and young people can come to the library to learn on their own terms. I wanted programs to be interactive. I wanted them to be educational in a way that was exciting. I wanted them to introduce teens to new career opportunities. It has been through my work with the YOUmedia Learning Labs Network (https://www.youmedia.org/), and specifically through the study and application of connected learning that I have been able to see some success in these areas, though I am always pushing for ways to better my programs.

Connected Learning

The Connected Learning Alliance defines connected learning as taking place, “...when someone is pursuing a personal interest with the support of peers, mentors and caring adults, and in ways that open up opportunities for them. It is a fundamentally different mode of learning than education centered on fixed subjects, one-to-many instruction, and standardized testing.” As such, connected learning is based on a set of six guiding principles of what learning should be. Learning is connected learning when it’s interest-powered, peer-supported, openly networked, academically oriented, production-centered, and is grounded in a shared purpose (https://clalliance.org/why-connected-learning/).

Connected learning in libraries means providing more and more opportunities for teens to engage and be active in their learning. It's fun. It's messy. It encourages teens to try out academic pursuits in the arts and sciences without fear of failure. It encourages young people to make mistakes and learn from them. And don't be afraid—utilizing connected learning in library programs does not mean that you have to have the most advanced technologies available, or that you have to be an expert at the subjects that you approach with your teens. This model of learning encourages collaboration across organizations and disciplines, allowing libraries to work with other educators and experts to create unique and powerful experiences for their young participants. In adopting
connected learning as a model for service delivery and program design, libraries are able to better meet the 21st century learning needs of their younger patrons.

Resources to Learn More!

If you are interested in studying up on connected learning, or in how you might use it as a foundational element of your program design, I have a plethora of resources listed below. Among these are opportunities to do research, to engage with a community of other informal educators, and to access a lot of cool ideas for programs!

Great Reads:


This is the best place to start when considering connected learning and how it fits in with the programs at your library. This fantastic guide will give you some great ideas, resources, and a good jumping off point in considering the learning needs for your teen patrons.

Retrieved from: http://www.ala.org/yaforum/sites/ala.org.yaforum/files/content/YALSA_nationalforum_Final_web_0.pdf


This report details the application of connected learning principles through the initial round of MacArthur Foundation funded YOUmedia Learning Labs.


**Ways to Connect & Learn More**

**Educator Innovator**

https://educatorinnovator.org/

A regularly updated collection of blogs, videos, archived webinars, and fantastic resources from librarians, teachers, and other cool folks in informal education.

**The Current**

http://thecurrent.educatorinnovator.org/

Operated by Educator Innovator and the National Writing Project, The Current provides an awesome space to connect with other educators and share resources.

**YOUmedia Network Community of Practice**


Free community to join with other library and museum professional across the country.

**Places for Research**

**Connected Learning Alliance**

http://www.clalliance.org/

Explanation of Connected Learning philosophy and educational framework, video resources.

**The Digital Media and Learning Research Hub**

http://www.dmlhub.net

Blogs, videos, white papers focused on open and Connected Learning, conference info, research repository.
GET INVOLVED

Public and School Librarians Unite!

If you are looking for ways to get more involved in your field and make contact with other library workers in your community, consider becoming a member of the Alabama Library Association (ALLA). Membership in ALLA connects public, school and college librarians and paraprofessionals across the state. Through ALLA you can network with others in your field, receive reduced registration pricing for workshops and conferences, access Listservs of interest, and find opportunities for continuing education credits.

The Children’s and School Librarian’s Division (CSLD) of ALLA is looking for public and school librarians and paraprofessionals to find innovative ideas to promote library services to children. In 2018-2019 we are looking for members to help with writing articles, conducting webinars and plan programming and presentations for our annual conference in April 2019.

Join us today as we work together to share resources, knowledge and best practices that help us reach our goal of providing a brighter future for the children of Alabama. If you would like information on how to get involved, contact Laura Tucker, CSLD President, at ltucker@bham.lib.al.us or call 205-332-6616.
STEAMing along

Paper Towel Roll & Pom-Pom Challenge

On those days when there is thunder and lightning (or just rainy), this awesome game is simple and fun:

**01 Gather Supplies**
- Empty paper towel rolls
- Shallow cardboard container or box top
- Marker
- Pom-Pom or small ball
- Glue

**02 Cut**
Start by cutting the paper towel rolls into 1.5 inch hoops. Once you have ten pieces cut, arrange them randomly inside the cardboard box top, leaving enough room for the pom-pom or small ball to roll between the pieces. Glue the hoops to the box top and wait for adhesive to dry. Assign numbers from 1 to 10 to the hoop segments and play.

**03 Play**
The object of the game is to roll the pom-pom or ball through all of the numbered pieces in correct order. Toddlers can get in on the fun, too, by practicing rolling the pom-pom through the tunnels and by identifying numbers.

**04 Make it Yours**
The game is great for building fine motor skills, balance, coordination, counting and number identification. You can also turn the math game into an art activity by decorating the box with crayons, markers, or paint.

**For more math fun, check out:**
- *By the Numbers* (for older kids)
  National Geographic Kids; 978-1426320729
- *Good Night Numbers*
  McKellar, Danica; 978-1101933787
- *Lemonade in Winter: A Book About Two Kids Counting Money*
  Jenkins, Emily; 978-0375858833

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**Make Your Own “Lightning”**

Here’s a fun and easy activity for a stormy, spring day:

**Materials**
- Fluorescent light bulb
- Rubber balloon

Turn off all of the lights in the room and make it as dark as possible. Cover windows if needed.

Statically charge the balloon by rubbing it on hair for several seconds. Move the statically charged balloon across the bulb without touching. The bulb will illuminate with a dim light. If the balloon didn’t get a good enough charge to light the bulb, try rubbing it on a wool blanket. If the humidity is high, you might have better luck on a less humid day.

**For more lightning info, check out:**
- *Freddie the Frogcaster*
  Dean, Janice; 978-1621570844
- *National Geographic Readers: Storms*
  Goin, Miriam; 978-1426303951
- *Storm is Coming*
  Tekavec, Heather; 978-0142400708
- *Weather Basics: Lightning*
  Edison, Erin; 978-1429660587
The Lost Frost Girl
written by Amy Wilson
Released Nov. 7, 2017

Review by Cassandra Brindle

Owl. What a horrible first name to saddle a child with. Despite her frustration with her mother’s idea of a ‘unique’ name for a ‘unique’ child, Owl has managed to have a mostly normal (NOT unique, thank you very much) life. It would be nice if her mother would tell her who her father is, but overall things are good. Unfortunately, that’s all about to change.

The trouble all starts with her new classmate, Avery. He’s strange and different. He watches her like he knows something she doesn’t. Then, the temperature starts to drop around her at times. Things begin to freeze. As Owl’s questions grow, she ends up having to turn to her mother’s special book of fairy tales which she has long dismissed as nonsense. However much Owl longs for a normal life, there are elemental forces gathering who have nefarious plans revolving around her very existence. If she doesn’t figure out what’s happening soon she, her friends, and the father she’s never known will all be in grave danger.

Well…I have to admit I had higher hopes for this book. It was one of those stories that leaves you feeling kind of ‘meh.’ It wasn’t bad. The plot was acceptable, the characters were fine, the world development was OK, but there is just nothing there to really grab the reader. It felt exactly like a cut-and-paste fairy tale based story, but with new and weird (but cute!) classmates with secrets added for good measure. Strange powers connected to an unknown, mysterious father figure? Check. Half-bloods? Check. Nondescript conflict between humanity and fill-in-the-blank beings? Check and double-check.

The Lost Frost Girl is a pretty generic read that leaves me with little to praise or rail against. If it’s on sale somewhere cheap and your juvenile section desperately needs some fantasy-style filler, go for it. Otherwise, it’s not really worth your time.

Recommended for: Fans fantasy, especially with a female protagonist.

Things to watch out for: One character almost freezes to death due to main character’s loss of control.
**Self-paced training**

### A Teen Walks into the Library

In the module, learners will gain a beginning-level understanding of working with teens in the library setting, so it’s great for any staff members who work with teens. (Colorado Virtual Library) [https://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/a-teen-walks-into-the-library/](https://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/a-teen-walks-into-the-library/)

Also check out other self-paced courses, Getting Started with Library Customer Service [https://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/getting-started-library-customer-service/](https://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/getting-started-library-customer-service/) and Online Tech Training for Staff [https://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/online-tech-training-staff/](https://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/online-tech-training-staff/)

### May 8

#### Summer YA Announcements 2018

Want to hear about the latest in YA? Join us for a free, hour-long webinar, during which representatives from Bloomsbury, Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group, Sourcebooks Fire, Sky Pony, and Albert Whitman will give you the scoop on their upcoming titles. (Booklist) [https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars](https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars)

### May 10

#### The Golden Key to Successful Grant Requests

The need statement is arguably the most important part of a grant proposal. Uncover the most effective methods for documenting the need, as well as ways to use that information to engage the reader, by joining GrantStation’s CEO, Cynthia Adams for this90-minute webinar! (TechSoup) [https://www.techsoup.org/community/events-webinars/default](https://www.techsoup.org/community/events-webinars/default)

### May 15

#### Must-Have Middle Grade

Middle-grade books are made to capture readers imaginations. Join representatives from Bloomsbury, Disney, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Penguin Young Readers, and Macmillan Children’s for a sneak peak of this season’s hottest fiction and non-fiction books. Be prepared to be delighted! (Booklist) [https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars](https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars)

#### Five Secrets of Email Marketing Geniuses

There is more power and leverage in one email subscriber than 100 Facebook likes or 50 Twitter followers if email marketing is done right. Problem is, 9 out of 10 nonprofits don’t do it right. In this educational session, we will share the secrets of email marketing geniuses. (Firespring) [https://www.firespring.org/education/webinars.html](https://www.firespring.org/education/webinars.html)

### May 22

#### Summer Fun with Digital Citizenship

As summer fast approaches, learn tips for keeping kids engaged when school is closed, including: Tools for engaging students academically and creatively; Tips for helping students stay digitally safe; Ways to promote healthy media balance through fun outdoor activities and screen time limits. (edWeb) [https://home.edweb.net/upcoming-webinars/](https://home.edweb.net/upcoming-webinars/)

#### Social Media 101 for Nonprofits

This session includes practical tips and tools for extending your cause and mission via social media. We cover the basics of using social media for your nonprofit organization and give you handy tips for the “Big 3:” Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. You may be surprised to learn that Facebook is less important than you’ve been told and LinkedIn may be more important. (Wyoming Nonprofit Network) [https://wynonprofit.org/page-1203957](https://wynonprofit.org/page-1203957)

### May 23

#### Visual Merchandising for Public Libraries: Practical Strategies for Applying Bookstore Insight

If you could give your shelves a shopping spree, what would they be like? For decades, the retail industry has been merchandising their own libraries. (Infopeople) [https://infopeople.org/training/view/webinar](https://infopeople.org/training/view/webinar)

### May 24

#### YA Summer Reads

School’s (almost) out for summer and it’s time to add a few more titles to that summer reading list with these new and upcoming books. With this webinar we’ll help a young woman navigate the complicated politics of a fairy kingdom, make up with our handsome best friend while struggling to survive in the wilderness, get punished for our prankster ways through a summer job at a food truck with an uptight classmate, and decide if we can trust a mysterious stranger while hunting down murderous mermaids. (North Dakota State Library) [http://engagedpatrons.org/EventsExtended.cfm?SiteID=9851&EventID=337450&PK](http://engagedpatrons.org/EventsExtended.cfm?SiteID=9851&EventID=337450&PK)

### May 25

#### Little Women for a New Generation

A recommended Common Core ELA title for grades 6-8, *Little Women* still raises fundamental questions: What makes work worth doing? How can true love be recognized and nurtured? Can a young woman defy society’s conventions and succeed on her own terms? Using the Great Books Foundation’s Shared Inquiry method, learn how to engage students in close reading and lively discussion. PBS Learning Media: [https://adobe.ly/2r1yCp1](https://adobe.ly/2r1yCp1)

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**What’s Up? Webinars**

**Throw It Back with Penguin’s #TBT Webinar**

Penguin is throwing it back! Join Penguin Young Readers for a time-traveling webinar focused on historical fiction and nonfiction that will be on shelves in Spring &Summer 2018. This free, hour-long discussion will give you recommendations and book-talking points for historical fiction fans of all ages. (School Library Journal) [https://www.slj.com/webcasts/#](https://www.slj.com/webcasts/#)

**May 10**

#### Learning Environments

Join this webinar to learn to cultivate high-quality, developmentally appropriate, flexible learning environments that support teens individually and in group experiences as they engage in formal and informal learning activities. (YALSA) [http://www.ala.org/yalsa/continuingeducation/learning_environments](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/continuingeducation/learning_environments)

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**Book-Based Making: Projects to Inspire Young Readers**

Roll up your sleeves and engage cool project ideas, including upcycling with weeded books and other maker activities that encourage a connection to reading and are just plain fun. Our panel of crafty practitioners will show you how and answer questions in this interactive session. (School Library Journal) [https://www.slj.com/webcasts/#](https://www.slj.com/webcasts/#)

**May 16**

#### Getting to Know You: Connect with Patrons Experiencing Homelessness

Learn how to connect with some of your most marginalized patrons. Patrons experiencing homelessness may be some of the most overlooked library users. Misconceptions and fear on the part of both patrons and staff may interfere in connecting with these patrons. Monroe County has faced a number of issues concerning homelessness and the opioid epidemic. Discover how Monroe County Public Library connected with this population using the Harwood Method. (Indiana State Library) [https://continueded.isl.in.gov/find-training/online-training-series/](https://continueded.isl.in.gov/find-training/online-training-series/)

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