**WVLS Post-Conference Report***Please note: This report will be shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees and posted on the WVLS website in an upcoming board meeting packet.*

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference. What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?
2. ***The Room of Requirement: Libraries and This American Life presented by Lydia Sigwarth (Platteville Public Library)***

This session stood out to me because of the way it made me feel after the presenter was finished speaking. The presenter did an excellent job of describing and displaying through examples how the children’s librarian of her own childhood made her feel like she was the only child in the whole library. Her librarian had the skills and qualities to make her feel so special that her perspective of her life situation at the time, which happened to be pretty terrible in reality, was made magical. It really made me think about how I can personally connect more with the patrons I see in my department daily, not only those that I meet through programming, and how I can form better relationships with them. I am fairly shy by nature and stepping out of my comfort zone to make contact is a bit daunting, but the presenter offered some simple suggestions, such as “personalize things in your department” and “create special spaces for kids to have a sense of belonging” that got me thinking, “I can do that too!”

1. ***Writing in the Library presented by Alyssa Pisarski (North Shore Library, Glendale), Anne Kissinger (Wauwatosa Public Library), Lisa Quintero (Shorewood Public Library), and Melody Schuetz (Oak Creek Public Library)***

I enjoyed the ideas presented in this session. I have been thinking for a while now on how to get kids doing more writing in the library, because I know that it is just as important for early literacy as reading. These presenters gave some easy, yet fun, ways to incorporate writing into programs, both active and passive. The first presenter discussed a homeschool creative writing club, the format for each session, and activities included. Some of these sounded easy to duplicate, including “Would You Rather” prompts, “Fill-in-the-Blank” stories, and “Telephone Pictionary”. Even though I don’t think that a homeschool creative writing club is a possibility for me, I am thinking of using some of these ideas as passive programs in the kids’ room, and possibly teen room, here in Minocqua. Another presenter discussed how she was able to do a teen writing contest and another talked about an intergenerational pen pal program. The last presenter explained how to do writing workshops. Again, I appreciated this session because of the number of ideas and creative methods from a variety of presenters that I can tweak to fit my own library.

1. ***Move Over Mother Goose: Focusing on Families First presented by Dawn Foster (Portage Public Library)***

I was a bit surprised by this session, in a very nice way! It wasn’t at all what I was expecting, and it definitely made me think about my job in a new light. I expected tips and advice on how to include parents and get them more involved in children’s programs that I am already doing, such as storytime, but what the presenter really focused on was actually doing programs just for the parents! Examples of the types of programs that the presenter does for the parents in her community include a “back-to-school breakfast” for parents after dropping their kids off on the first day of school. She said that she had noticed that many stay-at-home parents seemed “lost” after dropping their kids off and were wandering aimlessly, or even tearfully, through the library. She recognized a need and created a way for parents in a similar situation to connect. Other programs that she has done specifically for parents include topic presentations from local experts on things like “How to Raise a Leader”, “Don’t be a Bully” and “Establishing Routines”. Even simple things like creating a “Diaper Depot” in the restrooms for emergencies so that parents don’t need to leave the library sets up a welcoming environment for the adults as well as the children. This presentation really opened my eyes on how to move above and beyond what I am currently doing to meet the needs of the whole family as they utilize my library.

1. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn’t know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

Even though I have met Denise Chojnacki (Rhinelander District Library) and Annette Miller (Tomahawk Public Library) before, I really enjoyed getting to know them better and developing a closer relationship with them. I attended sessions with them and we enjoyed each others’ company in between sessions as well. It was really neat to compare the different services we offer at our respective libraries, since we are in three libraries in the far north of our library system and serve similar populations. I learned, for example, that Annette does her “storytime” as more of a “drop in play time” and not a structured program with a theme. We all discussed how the kids we have attending our programs seem to be getting younger and younger and how we have adapted, or could further adapt, to this change. We also discussed things we liked and didn’t like about the sessions we attended together and different ideas that we feel we could implement at our libraries. Getting to know these two better and chatting with them really made the conference more fun for me.
2. As a result of attending this conference, what three things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

Three things that I am planning to implement in my own library include ideas from the three sessions that I described above. The first thing I would like to focus on is how to get kids doing more writing in the library. I have already set up a passive program for the month of November, which is National Novel Writing Month, with greeting cards, paper and a real mailbox, asking kids to write letters to their librarians. We will post responses on the wall above the mailbox. I have already received a letter and I just put the program out late last week!

The second thing is to make the kids’ room here in Minocqua more “about the kids”. We have a lot of kids that stop in between school and extracurricular activities for a few minutes here and there to play. Instead of focusing my time and attention on active programs, I would like to start thinking more about how I can set up the environment to make them feel special and welcomed, such as putting out a cardboard castle for them to read in (to correspond with our upcoming summer reading theme), or setting up a dramatic play center with rotating themes that correspond with the holidays. Even doing things like “name the stuffed animal” or “add an ornament to our tree” can help kids feel a sense of ownership and belonging.

The third thing I would like to do is to think of more ways to help parents. I am currently posting “early literacy tips” at my storytimes, but maybe actively testing out some of these skills would be helpful. I would like to post “tips for playing with your kids” in the play area and someday offer kits to check out with books on topics such as “how to help if your kids are bullied”. I am also thinking about how I can set up my space so that it is easy for parents to know which books are best for the different reading levels and how to move from board books to picture books to chapter books, for example. Even something as simple as offering reading lists and spotlight authors can make things easier for parents to grab and go.

1. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these three things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees? Assistance from WVLS?

I would like to have a meeting with my director to discuss some of the changes that I plan to implement (mentioned in #3 above). My director has been very supportive of my ideas and trusts me to spend my budget how I feel is the most advantageous for the families that utilize our library, so I am confident that she would be willing to help me in any way needed. I am also planning to make a presentation to our Library Board later in November to discuss some of my goals and the ways that I am hoping to spend my programming money. I also feel very well supported by my board and feel that they accept any ideas that I have.

Another thing I would like to do is to work with Anne Hamland from WVLS. She has been a sort of “mentor” to me since I became a Youth Services Coordinator, and I know she would be willing to chat with me about where to begin and how to accomplish things if I get “stuck”. Also, attending different meetups and workshops through WVLS has allowed me to get to know other librarians in our system (and other systems as well) who have offered great advice and ideas on how to get programs up-and-running, so turning to my network of fellow librarians will be a big help as well.

1. How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?

I honestly wish I would have known that Denise and Annette were attending the conference so that we could have carpooled. I would have had connections to make me feel more comfortable right off the bat. Also, I wish some of the sessions that had multiple topics of interest to me could have been recorded and archived so that I could have “attended” both. Overall, though, I really enjoyed the conference and gained a lot of great ideas, so I am very thankful for the scholarship, which allowed me the opportunity to attend!