

2023 WEMTA Conference Scholarship Reports

Rothschild, WI
February 5-7



Left to Right: Kristie Heistad, Julie Beloungy, Kay Heiting



WVLS Post-Conference Report

Julie Beloungy – School District of Thorp

1) Please highlight three sessions from the WEMTA 2023 conference.

- A. What's New in KiLit: Inclusive Picture Books you should know. Presented by: Jillian Heise, classroom bookaday. Jillian was passionate about sharing inclusive children's picture books. She showcased many books that need to be in our libraries with pictures and descriptions of the books. She also highlighted the fact that a better word for 'diverse' is to be 'inclusive'. Even offering 'diverse' books, still sets apart a group or type from what is considered 'normal'. Jillian provides a list on Follett Titlewave of her recommended books so it will be easy for me to order titles to add to our library collection. (Follett is the school version of Baker & Taylor.)
- B. Cybersecurity, Data Privacy, and Human Trafficking, Presented by: Aggie Salter. Aggie works at CESA5 as a tech coordinator. Her session was very informative in highlighting the dangers of online predators and the need for privacy restrictions. With our student data and use of apps and other online learning tools, we need to read the fine print and understand how the data will be used in order to protect the students. She provided a number of resources, especially from WI Dept. of Public Instruction which I will be sharing with our tech coordinator as well as using in my instruction for class visits. WI Department of Public Instruction has a number of online resources. One small tip I learned: when we take photos of events from our personal cell phones, if we don't have the correct data collection settings selected, location information can be shared as that photo goes online. Which means students can be located at events - something to consider!
- C. The Common School Fund, Legislation and Me! Presented by: Emily Dittmar with co-presenter: Michael Blumenfeld. This session was very interesting because the history and process of distributing the Common School fund was shared by Michael who is on the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands. This Board manages the money and distributes the dollars that go to Wisconsin school libraries. It is amazing to have this yearly funding source for library materials! Being familiar with public library advocacy and government relationship building, it was great to hear how this works on the public school library side. This is an area I would like to get more involved in.

2) Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session.

I have two experiences to highlight from the conference. The first was talking with a few vendors who I have only spoken to on the phone or emailed. It was wonderful to meet in person and put a face to a name. Penworthy and SORA/Overdrive both have representatives I have emailed or spoken to, but have never met. Both were very helpful and offered follow-up after the conference. It was great relationship building which makes the connection more personal with the company.

The other experience was being able to talk with other WVLS librarians in person. Kay H., Kristie, Anne H. and also Melissa S. from Neillsville were there. It was wonderful to have lunch together to talk about the sessions, how they operate in their locations, and so much more great conversation. I also had dinner on Sunday night with Anne H., Rachel M. and Kay. Getting to know these ladies outside of the usual library setting was a lot of fun and a highlight of the conference.

3)As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

- A. I will be ordering a number of the inclusive books Jillian has on her Titlewave book lists as well as books presented by the CCBC. It will provide a much needed update to our collection with some new books and also some weeding of our current materials. I also prominently display these new titles so they don't get lost in the shelves.
- B. I will be talking with our school tech coordinator about some of the student data privacy issues to make sure we are following recommended procedures. Also incorporating these issues for staff trainings should be a priority. While talking with our tech coordinator is something I will do right away, planning for staff training is more of a long term project and will take some time.

4)What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things?

I am fortunate that I do not need a lot of support in order to place my book orders. I have the funds, administrative support and knowledge of student preferences to purchase books to fit our collection goals.

In order to support the technology and privacy tools I learned about, it will primarily take time in my normal day. Our tech coordinator is great to work with and on-board for improving our privacy and student data safety. I will continue to talk with her and coordinate training sessions or at least provide information for staff in a newsletter or email. But I will be utilizing the tools from DPI to stay current on appropriate procedures and policies. Also reading journals like "School Library Journal" and talking with other library media specialists around the state to stay informed about new issues (ChatGPT, legislation, etc) will provide support to accomplish this goal.

5)How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful?

I'm not really sure...and I've really thought about this. 😊

I had a great conference with good sessions. I appreciate the meeting with Jamie M. and the other scholarship winners before the conference. I am thankful to have my own hotel room to be able to relax and decompress at the end of the conference day.

My only thought would be to have a wrap-up meeting a few days after the conference. We all disperse from the conference with this great information, but no organized way to share or collaborate. If there was a virtual meeting with the attendees (like the pre-meeting) post conference, it would be nice to talk about our experience and wrap things up. Or if a template for sharing conference resources was provided, each attendee could add to it and then be posted on the WVLS website.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Kay Heiting, Granton

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?

One of the sessions I attended was Building a Culture of Reading presented by the library media specialists at Neenah School District. It was a panel of librarians that give us tons of ideas to get children into the library. Some of the things I would like to try to include an author spotlight which could be shown on our hallway TV's, adding QR codes to my library shelves that link to book reviews and trailers, and perhaps hiding surprise stickers in the books for kids to find. These ideas are things that I have heard of before, but I want to give them another chance. I need to make sure that teens are coming back into the library space- and these 3 simple ideas would be easy enough to implement.

Another one was Authors, Illustrators OH MY! Presented by Jamie Jestadt. This session was a workshop model. She shared with us her presentations about author and illustrators that she has created. She uses these for emergency sub plans or virtual day activities. Then we all worked together adding videos and resources to the a shared document for different author and illustrators. I love the crowd sharing concept. Now when I need an emergency plan, I can just use her template and the video suggestions that the other librarians shared. I can find the author videos and read aloud- but time is usually an issue. This will help me be more efficient when I plan my lessons.

The final session I want to highlight was Differentiating Instruction with TeachingBooks.net, presented by Mary Ellen Graf. I have used TeachingBooks.net before, but it is one of the those resources that you need to go back to a couple to see what is new and available. There is so much information on this site about books, authors and cultural themes. All of the videos and resources are available in one place. New things that I discovered during this session included emergency sub plans for each month, a literacy calendar which includes national holidays and author/illustrator birthdays. Another favorite part of the website is printable QR codes shelf talkers or bookmarks- which will link to author information or book trailers. That will make my goal of building culture easier.

2) 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?

I had the opportunity to attend the trivia night. I wasn't really looking forward to it- however, once I got there it was a lot of fun. Our team consisted of the public children's librarian from Antigo, the school librarian from Neillsville, and another high school librarian. We didn't do very well in the competition, but it was a nice way to get to know people outside of the role we usually seem them in.

3) As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

I am going to really focus on creating a culture of getting patrons of all ages coming into the library and sharing what they are reading and help each other find new reads. I have already started one of these projects. I have asked my teachers to share what they are reading and a bitmoji of themselves. Then I place that poster on the shelf where the book is. It says "Look What Mr. Radloff is reading (or listening)- if we don't have the book, I include a note on the bottom that says we can order this book from other libraries. When they finish the book, I will update the poster and move it to the next shelf in the library.

I am going to purchase WeVideo for the library. I have been trying to "jazz" up my virtual read alouds but keep getting stuck. I am going to start small, but I like how WeVideo allows you to take video clips and still images and compile them into a short video. I am hoping to create an intro slide that says Chillin' With Mrs Heiting, then I will create read aloud videos or import authors reading their own books to share with students on virtual days. I also think this video platform would encourage students to create their own book trailers and book talks.

4) What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees? Assistance from WVLS?

Creating a culture of reading doesn't need too much support- the hardest part is finding the time to maintain the displays and posters. I think I can encourage one of my staff members to take an interest in this project. Right now she just pulls books that are interesting to her, I think if I give her a little more direction about a theme or topic she will have fun creating the displays.

The school is able to use Common School Funds to purchase WeVideo. It is helpful that we have gotten extra funds this year to support this purchase.

One thing that I could use more training on is creating engaging virtual story times and read alouds. I really enjoy doing these activities in person, but I am struggling to create engaging ones in a virtual environment.

5) How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?

I think the conference was very well done. There wasn't too much that I would improve on. The keynote speakers were interesting, the variety of sessions was engaging. Some of the sessions felt a little bit long, but others felt fairly short- but I guess that is determined by the content and speaker. Perhaps they could repeat some of the sessions- there were a few time slots where I wanted to see two or three presentations at the same time- but they were not offered any other time. Fortunately, we made connections with the other WVLS attendees and were able to share the notes from different presentations. I also really like that some of the presentations were on the conference app for anyone to download, even if they didn't attend that session- but going back and organizing all of those files is a daunting task.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to attend this conference, the things I learned will definitely improve the library experience for my patrons.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Kristie Heistand - Antigo

1) Please highlight three sessions from the WEMTA 2023 conference.

I thoroughly enjoyed the WEMTA (Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association) Conference this year and was able to bring back some great ideas and new interests to our library. There were many good sessions at the conference. I learned the most valuable information from three to four different sessions. Wisconsin PBS, Amanda Zieba, and her sessions on YouTube and your readers, and the new reads from Jillian Heise were sessions that really sparked my interest and I was able to gather the most information that would benefit our library and expand our library needs.

PBS Wisconsin was a presenter that I attended two different sessions of. Information at both sessions expanded my knowledge of what they offer. I learned how Wisconsin biographies empower people about the connections we can build with our patrons and home-schooled families. With their video productions and professional research tools, they can offer us a bridge to stimulate the child and motivate them to build a broad future. We are trying to build that asset base, give children significant goals, make children see an array of information to help make their own decisions. We could therefore use this base and access this to put it into play at our library. On their site is Kindness in the Classroom. An interesting and knowledgeable aspect of learning, awareness and sharing in the classroom. It is this type of learning that we want to be able to help pass on to our patrons and families and incorporate and connect us, to create a strong bond with them.

Secondly, I really enjoyed Amanda Zieba's presentation on YouTube & Your Readers. I connected with why she wants teachers or librarians to use this source in their curriculum. Some of the reasons also related to public librarians. Sharing these ideas with our homeschooled families is a terrific idea. They can see the different possibilities that could benefit them in their home teaching. Such examples are: Adding audio increases the child's reading comprehension. It also brings new experiences to your students that may not experience this type of learning otherwise. It can excite and engage students. Give a tired teacher a break to have the children watching and learning while the teacher regroups and gets organized for the next learning session. Another reason is that it brings a high quality of instruction to your students even if you cannot be there in front of them to personally teach them. And lastly, many children already know how to use YouTube and are familiar with it and so they are using knowledge previously learned. Amanda also taught us about what kind of videos to use or make. Such types of videos include 1st Chapter Fridays, Author or expert interviews, direct instruction videos, interactive videos, or brain activity or fun activity videos. I was extremely excited about the 1st Chapter Friday's videos. I would genuinely love to incorporate this into our public library somehow, especially for teen readers or young adults, an area where we need to address.

My third session that sparked my interest was What is New in Kid Literature, with Jillian Heise. She shared with us about new books coming out or just released, fitting to a variety of subjects, cultures, and nationalities. There were tales and twists, grandpa stories, books on black history, earth day, kindness and welcoming, bodies, confidence, language, disabilities, natives, read with pride, native nations, and family culture. This was a vast variety for me to bring back to our director to incorporate some of these books into our collection. I was also able to come back with titles to purchase to accompany our summer reading program theme.

2) Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session.

My most highlighted experience of the conference was meeting with Amand Zieba at the writer's book fair. I was able to connect with her and have a real conversation with her. I learned about the books she has written, and we talked about our library's summer reading program. We discussed how maybe some of the books could be purchased for our library shelves and about the series. Another topic we talked about was the 1st chapter Friday's and how I am interested in approaching our library director to see if we could incorporate this into our library. This was a pleasant experience for me, the one-on-one conversation. I left the conference that afternoon feeling very motivated and energized. I found my Spark.

3) As a result of attending this conference, what two things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

As a result of the conference, I would like to put into action the 1st Chapter Fridays. I feel if we can do this once in a while on our site it would be a benefit to our readers. We were seeking some current ideas to incorporate more teens into the library again, especially since covid, and I feel this might be some way to spark interest in that age group. Another idea I picked up at the conference is Book Trailer posters. Something in this theme idea would be good for us to be posting in areas of the library. Even the thought of reading info for in the hallways or restrooms is something we could incorporate to our library. Books love notes to the next reader was another quick idea that could be added easily. This is something I want to add to our summer reading program also.

4) What kind of support is needed for you to implement these two things?

Incorporating these ideas will involve our director's approval and help to implement these suggestions. Since I work directly with our director, I would need her guidance and support to develop these ideas. Any support from WVLS would be appreciated, even if it is just a phone call or email to help follow up would be valued.

5) How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful?

I have never had an opportunity to attend a conference like this one before and I was extremely impressed, happy to have attended, and I have benefitted from this experience greatly. It was wonderful to talk with other teachers or workers in my field and share some of their experiences and thoughts. Sharing some of their ideas of what has worked in the classroom or school library is firsthand advice that I value and feel confident to use or share. What works in one library does not always work in another but sharing the suggestions, ideas, and critiquing the idea can give us all insight to what is working in other libraries. I enjoyed learning from the authors, vendors, and teachers. They all brought along so much to share with us, it was amazing. I am grateful for the chance to attend the WEMTA conference and look forward to other opportunities to attend another one someday.