January 23, 2012 – 3 Hours

Standards: Administrative Leadership, Communication, Information Specialist

Today I arrived at Venice High School at 1:40 pm. It was somewhat difficult to find the library, as I’d never been on campus before, but I had the luck of running into Harry, a million word reader from last year who looked at me quizzically, trying to figure out who I was before blurting, “Ms. Bender, what are you doing here??”

I entered the library during lunchtime. Ms. Gill tried to give me a tour but was distracted, as the library was full of students working. It was impressive; I couldn’t help but to compare it to my middle school library, which is full of kids playing checkers and chess, and just a few doing work during lunch.

Holy cow! These kids are huge! And have facial hair--fully grown in!

When the bell rang, a teacher brought her class in to take the STAR test on the Accelerated Reader website. Luckily, I am quite proficient at Accelerated Reader, and so helped her class take their quiz.

I had a nice chat with the teacher and after discussing AR with her, she asked me if I would a) teach an in-service to the English department, and b) teach one to parents. Of course I will!

I had a conversation with Ms. Gill about my weaknesses. I told her I particularly need help with cataloging, inventory, and professional groups. She said she could help me with all those things. I am excited. Also, Ms. Gill generously invited me to a luncheon on Saturday for the LAPL group she’s in. I am going to try to go. ☺

January 28, 2012 – 5 hours

Standards: Professionalism

Holy cow. I just hobnobbed with teacher librarians and public librarians for hours on end at the annual FOCAL luncheon.

I am counting time from when Caroline picked me up to when she dropped me off; we talked books, awards, people from door to door. She took me to pick up her friend Annette, who was actually In The Room at the ALA awards announcements last week, and who proceeded to tell us all about the winners, about the committees who choose the books, and her experiences. She is a currently a library science professor at two (three?) different universities and took me under her wing for the day while Caroline did her presidential duties. At one point, Annette and I had to walk to the main branch of LAPL to find the children’s librarian to make sure that the projector was on it’s way, and we took a little tour of the children’s and teen section. I am so jealous. That library is incredible!

I met they guy in charge of outreach to public schools and got his card. I also met Amy Novesky, author of *Me, Frida*, the book that won this year’s FOCAL award. She signed a book for me and I will bring it to Webster on Monday.

The biggest thing I think I got out of today was meeting people, and realizing that networking is really, really important. Everyone has something wonderful to offer others, and even a conversation can be a strong connection. For example, at lunch I ended up sitting across from a public librarian whose son went to my dad’s school, and so knew my father, and who had gone through the adoption process with him, which I am currently going through. Nice connection!

January 30, 2012 – 5 hours

Standards: Management, Professionalism

Today was a long day. Caroline showed me a wall of books and had me pick out ones that “seemed too young for high school.” This was challenging, as in my opinion, there are readers of every level of book at every school. I did the best I could and came up with a small stack, which she told me I could have for Webster.

As soon as I processed them.

Processing is a skill I don’t really have, and she knows that. So she sat me down and showed me how to do it. I had to call downtown to see which number to begin with, and had to call them a couple of more times for help with the printers. I ended up almost completing about ten books. It takes a while! I also realized that I need to purchase some supplies. I can see how not having them would make things difficult. I am hoping that my principal will approve the order.

Around 4:00 we made our way to Hamilton. Caroline drove and talked my ear off about which books she was going to bring up. Of course, the ALA awards would be brought up, but she also had a stack of books to pass around. I was intrigued, as I didn’t know what sort of format would take place.

We got there, and Rosemary had already set up a bunch of seats. There were six of us, and everyone brought books and treats, except me. We spent the next two hours discussing books, authors, events, and the awards. I felt horribly out of place, and incredibly uninformed. I told them this, and their sweet response was, “well, you’ll just have to start coming regularly and learn!” They were so welcoming and sweet. I am inspired by their knowledge.

February 6, 2012 – 3 hours

Standards: Information Specialist, Access, Instructional Leader

I learned about moodles today. Apparently there is a moodle set up for library practice scholars, which I would love to use. I have signed up and took the virtual tour. Also, I took a tour of the library to see how it was set up—really looked at it to see where things are. I am on a mission in my own library to put the series with different authors together on the shelf. It’s not like that at VHS, although I questioned Caroline extensively about it and she agrees with me.

February 13, 2012 – 3 hours

Standards: Management, Access, Administrative Leadership

Today when I got to Venice, Caroline sent me into the back because she has apparently been saving books for me because they are “too young” for a high school library. “You need more practice cataloging,” she said, and set me to work. Cataloging is hard! I really thought Destiny would make it a lot easier, but you still need a Dewey book, which I need to purchase. It was a bit difficult, because I was at the main desk entering books into the computer using my account, while students still wanted to check books out, so Caroline had to keep running back and forth to log back in so I could help them. I do not like cataloging as it is boring and tedious; I’d much rather help someone research or recommend a book.

One thing we spoke about is computer monitoring. At DWMS, I am very careful with who is on which computer, and what they are doing. Caroline doesn’t even ask; students can just come in, sit down and look at whatever they want to look at. They can also print for free, as many pages as they want! I charge ten cents per page. This does not cover the cost of toner but it certainly makes them think carefully about what they are printing. It also saves trees.

February 27, 2012 5.5 hours

Standards: Management, Administrative Leadership, Professionalism,

As I walked up the stairs to the library today, it once again occurred to me how very different high school is from middle school, especially a middle school with a dress code. As I stepped over bodies entwined together like rope and saw more cleavage than I see on television, I tried not to go into shock.

I saw Caroline talking to a student when I walked in. She saw me and immediately said, “oh, good, you’re here. I have $5000 I need to spend by Wednesday. I want you to work on a book order for me.” I spent the next few hours hunched over a computer (I really need to work on my posture!), eyes straining to read reviews, checking whether or not the book was already in their library, finding the list of ALA award winners, and trying to figure out Follet’s website, which I don’t prefer over Mackin’s much more intuitive experience. It was quite enjoyable, having a focused activity to work on, and actually having a budget to work with, although I wish it was for DWMS. I did add in some of my personal favorites. For example, I think that Mercedes Lackey books ought to be in every library.

She interrupted me, and as I blinked at her she reminded me that it was time to go to the book talk at Hamilton. She drove and I babbled about the book club I run at my school, and how we use Donors Choose to get books. She was very interested in this, and made me repeat it during the book talk. I presented how we choose our girls, what is expected of them (thank you notes and photos to Donors Choose, showing up at weekly meetings, reading the assigned amount of words, etc), things we talk about in book club (the week’s reading— but also how to read a book without damaging the spine, ways to set up a bookshelf so it looks pretty, the books themselves) how to order from Donors Choose (none of the other librarians had used it before!), and—something that is truly important to me—that each girl gets to keep her book to start/build her personal library. They all had questions! I couldn’t believe it, that *I* actually had something interesting to share with *them*. Awesome. We also talked about books—books that had just come out, books we are reading, etc. I shared about the two mermaid books I just read—*Tempest Rising* and *Forgive My Fins*.

March 5, 2012 - 3 Hours

Standards: Information Specialist

Today we dealt with printer issues. Of course, in order to process books, you need to print out stickers with barcodes and spine labels on them, right? Sounds easy? Not so much. We spent just about the entire time trying to figure out how to correctly align the sticker paper, which stickers to use, which settings to use, etc. There are just too many options! I take issue with Destiny only using very specific paper that generally needs to be specially ordered, and not all kinds of paper. What a pain! We finally figured things out after making many mistakes—thank goodness we printed on white paper (the backs of paper students printed by mistake, to stay green) first.

One thing I still can’t get over is that students can print as much as they want, so they really seem to take advantage of that. At my school, we are out of white paper, so everything is quite colorful. At Venice, apparently they don’t have such a shortage. Wow!

I reminded Caroline about teaching a class and she said she’d work on getting a teacher in there for me to work with. I am scared about this aspect of this project, as it is getting close to CST’s and, at my school at least, that’s when people start going crazy and not allowing anything new or different into their classes. I am trying to think positively about this.

March 12, 2012 - 3 hours

Standards: Management

Today was very relaxed, as Caroline said that she needed me to work on creating an inviting display for Women’s History month. I switched around some furniture and covered it with paper to make it look nicer, then grabbed books about successful, strong women to display. I don’t think I realized how much time it takes to put a display like that together. We also discussed my teaching a class—there is an English teacher I could teach for and Caroline also requested that I teach a class on how to make book trailers in Google Presentation to her library aides and the Venice HS library club. Honestly, that sounds like more fun.

March 19, 2012 - 4 hours

Standards: Information Specialist, Literature and Literacy, Human Relations, and Professionalism

Today was a whirlwind of activity! There were so many students and they all needed so much help. I spent the entire time running around librarianing—helping students find books, find information on the computer, etc. My favorite part was when a student was returning *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* and her friend was with her and I asked her if she’d read *Wanderlust*. She hadn’t, and I talked her into it, and her friend into Hugo. That was the best part of the day.

When school was out, Caroline reminded me that I still needed to continue to work on professional activities and networking, and then invited me to the VHS English teacher book club. They discussed *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* by Aimee Bender, which I’d never heard of before. They all brought food to share and discussed the one book. (Of course, one woman brought lemon cake!) It sounds interesting. I think I like the way Caroline orchestrates her book club better—with everyone bringing all the books they’ve read in the last month and each person gets time to hold each book up and talk about that, rather than spending two hours on the same book. While they really were able to go in depth—they are high school English teachers, after all—my eyes began to cross after a while and frankly, I was ready for a new subject. However, they were incredibly welcoming and I completely felt included.

March 26, 2012 – 5.5 hours

Standards: Information specialist, Management, Literature and Literacy

When I walked in today, Caroline told me that she had a lot for me to do, but to wait by the counter and give her one moment while she helped someone do something. I waited and watched her run around, helping person after person. I picked up a book and read while waiting—*No More Dead Dogs*—to see if I should get it for my school library. Caroline was still running around. After about 10 minutes, I noticed that retired LAUSD library-goddess Nancy Reich was in the back, weeding books, so I went to her and picked her brain about how to weed. She gave me some pointers—look at date, information, type of book (for example, a science book from 1954 versus a poetry book from 1954), and condition of book, etc. She also said that a lot of weeding is arbitrary, which made me laugh. I helped her weed for the next few hours as we talked about weeding, and then the three of us were off to Hamilton High for our monthly book talk.

When I pulled out the chocolate, I was cheerfully informed that I’d been officially accepted into the group. We discussed the books we’d read the month prior. I heard about many, many books that sounded interesting, but was told that they were too old for middle school. I argued this, as I always do; I vehemently believe that middle school students are: experiencing violence and death, having sex, doing drugs, involved in gangs, etc., and they should have books to connect to about these topics. They disagreed for the most part, but grudgingly conceded to putting an “8th grade only” sticker on them.

I strongly believe in self-selection, although even I have my limits, as demonstrated by the time a history teacher asked for the entire *Clan of the Cave Bear* series to be put in my middle school library. The conversation went like this:

Teacher: I would like the entire *Clan of the Cave Bear* series in this library, please.

Me: Have you read it?

Teacher: No, but I hear it’s a phenomenal fiction about interactions between Neanderthal and the first humans.

Me: It’s like soft porn. Especially book two. That was my favorite.

Teacher: \*blink\*

Teacher: …

Me: …Well, maybe not even “soft.” But, anyway, no, I’m not putting them in this library.

Maybe I’m wrong, but I’m ok with that. According to Nancy, I get to look at my demographics and decide what I’m comfortable with in my library. That makes a lot of sense to me.

April 23, 2012 – 3 hours

Standards: Professionalism, Management, Literature and Literacy

Today Caroline had three amazing authors come in for a panel discussion: Nina LaCour, Stephanie Perkins, and Gayle Forman. I’d never thought to have one in my own library! It was hosted (MC’d) by Children’s World, one of the last remaining specialty bookstores in the area, I think. The women were all dynamic and excited about reading and writing. They spoke for about an hour to a room was full of students brought in by their English teachers, who asked thoughtful, pointed questions. I helped set up and mingled with the students. Unfortunately, the books were all high school level; all three authors paused when I told them I was a middle school librarian and gently shook their heads no when I asked if their books would be appropriate for my library. Bummer; I have a shelf just for signed books.

In any case, it was an incredibly successful event. I say this because I heard students discussing the books and the authors and writing in general as they left and to me, that’s the main criteria.

After the panel I stayed and helped clean up and discussed books with students. It was a fun afternoon.

April 30, 2012 – 3 hours

Standards – Teacher, Instructional Leader

Today I taught Ms. Broger’s class. I feel it went pretty smoothly. After talking to Ms. Broger over email a bunch of times, I put together a lesson to teach some background information about the Renaissance for her students, who were studying Romeo and Juliet. It’s just as well; when I asked them to say anything about the Renaissance, Shakespeare, or Romeo and Juliet, none of them had anything to say! So, they each had to go to my pathfinder to find five facts about a topic that I gave to them. They were pretty open to what we were doing and seemed engaged. At one point, I believe the words, “sir, please take your lips off her shoulder” came out of my mouth, but other than that, they were well behaved. One issue I ran into was even though I explained that they were to use the pathfinder, a pair just looked up their topic on Yahoo! Answers. I asked them how they knew that the page was a solid source and they didn’t have a good answer for me, so I sent them to the pathfinder. I think the lesson went well. They were able to find some solid information on their topics and hopefully learned more about the life and times of William Shakespeare.