A LIVING LABORATORY

The Laboratory Schools have had a productive year in all areas of our mission. In our last edition of *A Living Laboratory*, we highlighted student achievements and programs that our ISU students used to prepare for their career.

Library Media Centers in the Lab Schools

The library media centers at both Thomas Metcalf School and University High School are hubs of research, writing, and collaboration. The library media staff at both schools work together and with faculty in each school to enrich the learning experience for our students. To enrich the experience, the teams at Thomas Metcalf School and University High Schools find both print and electronic resources that align with teacher's lessons. In addition to their work with Lab School students and future teachers, each school has reached out to the education community to share what has worked for the Lab Schools and to learn what is being used in other educational settings. Below is a quick summary of each school's outreach effort:

Thomas Metcalf School:

Presentations

- ***Teacher – Librarian Relationships and Classroom Literacy,*** Brenda Thompson, Future Educators Association Profession (FEAP), Illinois State University, January 2013
- ***A is for Apps Presentation,*** Brenda Thompson, Guest Speaker, C&I 454 Selection and Use of Materials in the Secondary School Library, Illinois State University, February 2013
- ***Digital Resources for Student Research and Engagement,*** Brenda Thompson, ISU English Scholar Award Recipients, Illinois State University, February 2013.

Library Events

- **Book Fair** - Family Event to promote reading – Barnes & Noble, November 2012
- **Mystery Dates** –less circulated books were placed in decorated brown paper bags and students were able to pick a "date" for the evening to read, Thomas Metcalf Library, February 2013
- **Mystery Readers** – guest readers throughout the year are invited to share a favorite story with our PreK-2nd grade students, Thomas Metcalf Library, 2012-2013

University High School:

Presentations

- ***Using Pinterest to Promote Your School Library***, Gretchen Zaitzeff, ISLMA Annual Conference, St. Charles, November 2012
- ***Deliciously Pinning: Using Social Bookmarking for Research, a Teacher-Librarian* Collaboration**, Cassie Graham and Gretchen Zaitzeff, ICE Mini-Conference, Lisle, April 2013
- ***What's Happening in the Library? Teen Programming in a School Libraries,*** Latrice Ferguson and Gretchen Zaitzeff, ISLMA Mini-Conference, Charleston, April 2013
- ***Pin It! Mark It! Tag It! Social Bookmarking for Librarians,*** Gretchen Zaitzeff, ISLMA Mini-Conference, Charleston, April 2013

Visiting Schools

Robison High School, East Peoria High School, Cornerstone Christian Academy, Deer Creek Mackinaw High School, and Dominican University's Graduate Studies in Library Science Program. We are still expecting visits from librarians at Fieldcrest CUSD and the Kewanee School District during the 2013-2014 school year.

Technology

Technology in both schools will be improved for 2013-14. Metcalf 4th through 8th graders will receive netbooks from U-High for their daily use as Metcalf pilots a one-to-one computing environment. The pilot at Metcalf will last one year and will utilize Google applications. In addition, the pilot will include researching hardware options for a new equipment purchase for the 2014-2015 school year. To support both the pilot as well as the new equipment purchase next year, a technology fee of $40 per student will be assessed for grades 4-8. The fee will help fund the new infrastructure needed to support a one-to-one environment. In addition, the fee money will help with professional development for our Metcalf faculty and give us the resources to purchase applications that will enhance student learning.

At University High School, we will continue the one-to-one initiative using the Lenovo Thinkpad which is better suited for high school student use. In addition, the hardware chosen will be more durable. Both schools have arrived at these conclusions after consulting with faculty, students, and parents through the tech planning process. Tech coordinators Jim Kurz (U-High) and Wes Matejka (Metcalf) have been involved at both schools to insure we are addressing the prerequisite skills and knowledge needed to integrate technology successfully at each grade level.

Common Core and Standards Based Report Cards in the Lab Schools

Over the past three years both Metcalf and University High School have been working through the process of adopting common core standards in the content areas in which they are available as well as aligning curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment to the common core. As a natural progression in this process, both schools have been working diligently on moving to standards based grading. Metcalf is currently using a standards based report card, while University High School has been making progress toward a standards based report card. All of this activity has occurred through our shared governance process, involving leadership teams at both schools.

Faculty at Thomas Metcalf School have raised the question of eliminating grades all together as the standards based grading process utilized has helped students and parents focus their attention on the knowledge and skills they are mastering. U-High will transition to the standards based report card, and while eliminating grades is not an option due to college admissions processes, a standards based report card will be helpful in communicating student proficiency on standards. A timeline for this transition has been worked on with departments.

There are inherent benefits to standards based grading which have been discussed at the building level. These benefits are important to our students. In a standards based grading environment students have a more specific understanding of what they do and don't know and thus can assume greater responsibility for their learning. While this impact on students is important, the standards based grading initiative has a broader, far reaching impact in which the Lab Schools can contribute. Future and current teachers need to have a clear and coherent voice that articulates student progress on standards at the classroom level as part of an overall assessment plan. The Lab Schools can contribute to the conversation regarding the value and importance of assessing performance on standards at the classroom level. This is essential so teachers can provide evidence of achievement in addition to standardized testing information. The Lab Schools can help in advocating balance in assessment methods as opposed to following the increased role of standardized testing which is now included in the evaluation of teachers, principals, and schools. The Lab Schools will focus on helping current and future teachers communicate student progress at the classroom level using common core as a basis for describing student achievement.

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Listening and Spoken Language Pre School at Thomas Metcalf School

An exciting collaboration will take place next fall when HILIA (Heart of Illinois Low incidence Association) will begin an oral preschool at Thomas Metcalf School. The program will provide Bloomington –Normal and Peoria Area families who have students needing this support a more geographically central location (Champaign is the closest). The program is a collaborative effort between Thomas Metcalf Laboratory School, Illinois State University Speech and Language Department, and Illinois State University Special Education departments. Together they will bring the following resources to meet the needs of area students;

1. Integration into regular preschool programs at Metcalf
2. Specially trained faculty in Listening and Spoken Language
3. Audiologist through ISU audiology department
4. Speech and Language therapist to provide support
5. Provide area districts with a lower cost alternative

We are looking forward to this collaborative relationship that will serve area students and school districts!

Jeffrey W. Hill