Library Program at Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Lab School

2021/2022

The Junior Kindergarten to Grade Six students visit the Dr. William Blatz Children's Library in half groups for a period of either half an hour or forty-five minutes (depending on their grade level). Teacher-Librarian, Krista Spence, starts the time together with sharing stories that help the students develop a joy of reading.

Krista is deeply committed to ensuring that each student has the opportunity to see elements of their own intersectional identities represented in the texts. Students often respond to stories read in the library by sharing elements of their own lives, including special foods they eat, languages they speak and other experiences they have. All contributions are celebrated and honoured. The discussions are rich and vary with every group, and often the library is a space where we end up grappling with very challenging questions about the world!

Krista feels a deep sense of responsibility in her position for students to learn the true history of Canada, and to develop a relationship with not only our school community, but the community of plants, animals, creatures, land that we inhabit in this space, on what was once the bed of ancient Lake Iroquois.

In the process of attempting to de-colonize education, times of the year and seasonal responsibilities occasionally take precedence over texts. Sometimes our seasonal work takes us outside, to care for the Indigenous medicine gardens, or collect seeds to plant in the place of invasive species. A variety of classes will have opportunities over the stretch of the year to participate in these powerful actions. We know that learning about something is not enough, often taking action is required, and that is an element of the work we do in the library, which can include creating posters or writing letters to the Prime Minister.

The library is funded primarily through fund-raisers that are held each year, one just before the holidays, and a Read-A-Thon that runs later in the spring. These funds help us to buy the wide variety of books, many from Independent Bookstores, such as Queen Books, Another Story, and Knowledge Bookstore (Brampton). We are so grateful for the support of families and students to grow our collection and to bring in diverse voices to our spaces, whether virtually or in person.

If you have any suggestions for books that your family loves, or that you think should be included in our library, please email Krista at krista.spence@utoronto.ca