



From The Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

I hope the last phase of this academic year has started on a productive and successful note for all!

Congratulations to the 2014 Tri-Association Award Recipients

Dr. Ernest Mannino: Recipient of the 2014 PAUL G. ORR AWARD

The Paul G. Orr Award is presented to a very few select individuals who, in the opinion of Association members, have made an outstanding contribution to education in the region. There is no other individual who more perfectly embodies the spirit of service to international education than Dr. Ernest Mannino. Dr. Mannino founded the Office of Overseas Schools in 1964 and served as its first Director for thirty-four years. It is a privilege for the Tri-Association Board of Directors and Membership to present this award to Dr. Mannino on behalf of the thousands of teachers and students whose lives he touched through his visionary leadership and service to the mission of our schools. This award will be presented to Dr. Mannino on October 9, 2014 at the 33rd Annual Educators' Conference in San José, Costa Rica.

50-Year Anniversary Office of Overseas Schools

The Office of Overseas Schools, US Department of State (A/OS) opened its doors July 1, 1964 with the overarching mission to provide assistance to American sponsored overseas schools that served the families of members of the US diplomatic corps. For the past fifty years the involvement of A/OS and the financial and technical support provided through staff development programs have enriched educational opportunities for all students who attend this type of school.

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The Tri-Association congratulates and salutes the founder and former A/OS Director Dr. Ernest Mannino, Dr. Keith Miller, Director of the Office of Overseas Schools, and Dr. William Scotti, Regional Education Officer for their service to the cause of American education in our region.

Tri-Association/TieCare Global Leadership Award

The American School of Puebla is the recipient of the 2014 Tri-Association/TieCare Global Leadership Award for their project, **Communteams**. This project is transforming a disadvantaged neighborhood in Puebla, Mexico through the efforts of the school community. **Communteams** serves as an outstanding example of a local initiative that is addressing a global issue.

Tri-Association Community Service Award

Colegio Menor is the recipient of the Community Service Award for their program, **Abuelitos**, which is improving the quality of life for the elderly in a disadvantaged community in Quito, Ecuador.

The American School of Puebla and Colegio Menor will be presented with the awards at the 33rd Annual Educators' Conference to be held in San José, Costa Rica in October 2014.

Margaret Sanders Foundation Scholarship

Lucia Ocejo, a Senior from ASF (Mexico City) was one of the recipients of the Margaret Sanders Scholarship for this year!

Association Events

March was a very busy month with the Literacy Institute in Monterrey, Mexico, followed by the GIN (Global

Issues Network) Conference in Santo Domingo. You will find highlights of these two events in the body of the newsletter. My deepest appreciation to the two schools that hosted these opportunities for teachers and students: the American School Foundation of Monterrey for serving as a demonstration school for best practice literacy methods and Carol Morgan for organizing a memorable GIN student conference.

After two very successful years, the Literacy Institutes will be coming to an end in May of this year. More than 100 teachers and administrators from our region took part in this successful initiative. I want to thank the participating schools for their efforts and commitment towards enriching this important part of their program and the American School Foundation of Monterrey for sharing their expertise in this area.

The next cohort will offer specialized training in Inclusive/Special Education through the University of Kentucky and transfer credit through SUNY. The Office of Overseas Schools awarded the region a grant to support teachers who may be interested in pursuing a degree or certificate in this area. This is a unique opportunity to strengthen the services that we offer to our most vulnerable population of students. The program description and supporting information was sent to Tri-Association School Heads in March. Applications are open for anyone from member schools who might be interested, so please contact me if you would like to take advantage of this program.

33rd Annual Educators' Conference

This October we will be back in San José, Costa Rica for our Annual Educators' Conference: **"Roots & Wings"**. The conference venue is the Real Intercontinental Hotel, located in Escazú, San José's thriving shopping and dining district. Hotel information is now on our

website and I encourage everyone to make your reservations early because of the favorable rate that was negotiated, which is only guaranteed until August 25, 2014. We extend our deepest appreciation to the Country Day School for serving as our host, and to the Lincoln School for supporting the event as the co-host. Registration is now open and the full conference program can be viewed online at www.tri-association.org

Pre-conferences will be held on October 6 and 7, 2014. Outstanding experts and trainers in their field will cover a variety of topics including instructional coaching, assessment, service learning, Common Core Literacy, Skills for 21st Century Schools, and understanding children's social-emotional lives. You can access the pre-conference descriptions, and presenter information through the registration link on the Association's home page.

The main conference will open on Wednesday, October 8, 2014 with a keynote address by Michael Thompson, Ph.D., the renowned author and clinical psychologist. In his address, ***"Eight Things You Cannot Do for Your Children (But Wish You Could)"***, Dr. Thompson will place the spotlight on parenting issues caused by overly involved parents who can deprive their children of the psychological ownership for their own lives. On the second day of the conference, Michael Furdyk founder of TakingITGlobal, will take us through a journey of what is possible in our schools in his keynote: ***"Imagining Future Friendly Schools: Spreading Our Wings for Global Impact!"*** We will close on Friday on an inspirational call to building school cultures of trust and service through Cathy Berger Kaye's address: ***"In Youth We Trust"***.

In an effort to capitalize on more in-depth experiences, you will notice that the program Wednesday-Friday

offers a number of full day sessions. These cover a range of topics including the impact of technology on family life; educating girls to lead; defining and evaluating instructional coaching programs; student-centered coaching; effective teacher induction and mentoring programs; future friendly schools; leadership and group dynamics; and leading in 21st Century Schools, among others.

THANK YOU!

The Association has had a very successful year thanks to your support and participation! I look forward to continuing to support your staff development needs and encourage you to give me feedback on how we can best do this.

I appreciate the contributions from the American School of Puebla, and Balboa Academy to this Spring Newsletter. I encourage other schools to send me contributions for the Fall Newsletter by June 1, 2014.

In this edition I am including two articles from the Marshall Memo about topics relevant to this time of the year: Tom Guskey's research on class ranking and valedictorians, and findings about summer learning losses in math and strategies to counter these.

I hope the end of your academic year flows smoothly and I look forward to seeing you in October!

Have a safe and restful summer vacation!

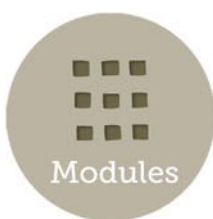
Warmest regards,
Sonia Keller, Ed. D.
Executive Director



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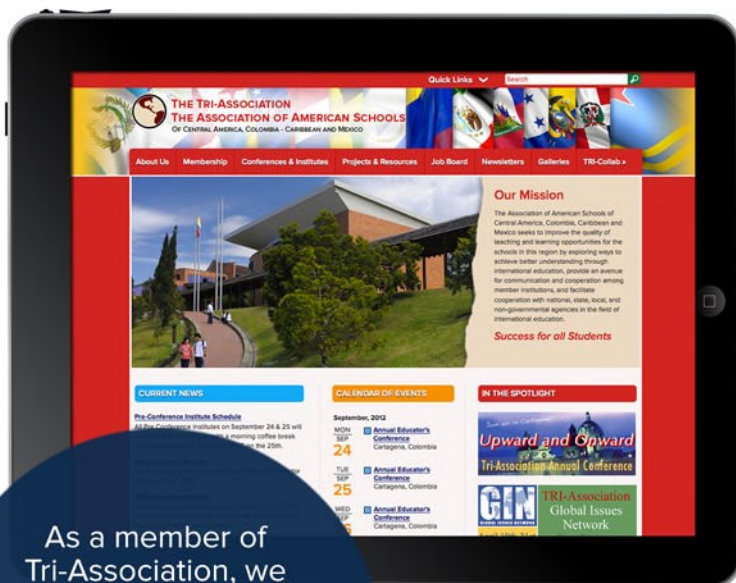
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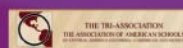
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The Literacy Institute: Snapshots of Empowering Readers & Writers

By Vincent Ventura (Literacy Trainer)

In early March fifty educators from Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico convened at the American School Foundation of Monterrey to continue their year-long training in Balanced Literacy. After one semester of planning, practicing AND videotaping reading and writing mini lessons, participants were ready to put their learning into action! For seven days participants were involved in a combination of demonstration lessons and modeling in authentic classroom settings. Mini lessons, conferring, small group instruction, running records, and other Balanced Literacy strategies took on a new meaning as participants had the chance to practice and give each other feedback on their skills.

At the end of a very intense week the teachers walked away with a new skill set and were empowered to take the next steps towards implementation of Balanced Literacy in their respective classrooms and schools.





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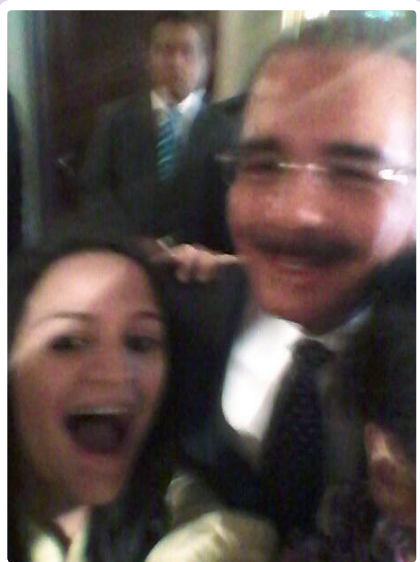
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A GIN Selfie: The Hidden Joys of Setbacks

By Vicky Colorado (GIN Sponsor, Balboa Academy)

On our recent trip to the Dominican Republic to participate in the annual AASCA Global Issues Network Conference, several Balboa Academy students had a wonderful opportunity. After an overbooking at the hotel we were staying at caused us to spend a night switching hotel rooms, we found ourselves back in the first hotel lobby; the last group waiting to be transported to the conference. The students were tired, but upbeat and had generally kept a positive attitude through our little "ordeal". As we stood there waiting for our bus, we were told that the President of the Republic, Danilo Medina, was about to arrive and we needed to give his entourage some room. While remaining respectful, our students seized the opportunity and asked him if they could take a picture with him. A series of phones appeared before the TV and news cameras as students, every bit the Millennials that



they are, captured the moment on their own terms. The next day as our conference got underway, we found out that the students' "selfies" had made the front page of two Dominican newspapers. Needless to say our kids were on Cloud Nine. As they celebrated (a lot!) they also noted that the reason that they had gotten to meet the President in the first place was actually because they had been dealt an apparent setback. We would not have been in the lobby at all, had we not had to deal with the first inconvenience.

In fact, from time constraints to first time jitters, Balboa students had faced several obstacles even before the GIN conference

began. The students came to an understanding, however, especially through the experience and exchanges enabled by the GIN conference itself, that the obstacles they face are minor compared to those faced by many others worldwide. The energy created by the will to act in service to your community, to follow through with a passion, is stronger than any obstacle as evidenced by the accomplishments of not only the keynote speakers who inspired the audience, but the young workshop leaders who are already making a difference. The nerves we felt when telling the kids we had to move hotel rooms or something or other hadn't worked out as planned, were misplaced, because the kind of leaders who hope to affect region-wide changes are not the type of people who crumble and moan at the first sign of difficulty. They expect the unexpected, prepare for it, and meet obstacles with solutions and resolve, sometimes even with smiles, knowing that many obstacles offer hidden opportunities, like the well-timed shot with the President.

The Global Issues Network conference was a call to step up to the challenge. Make it Happen. Regardless of the size of the issue, our attitudes towards it and the empowerment we feel to take action in a positive way can determine our success or lack thereof in finding a solution. In a seemingly silly way (selfie!) and in various very significant ways, the GIN conference opened our students' eyes to the possibilities hidden in the challenges they will face.

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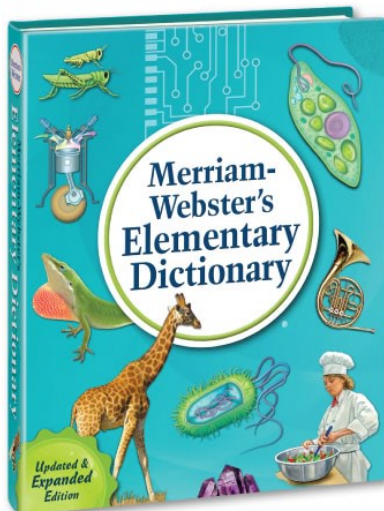
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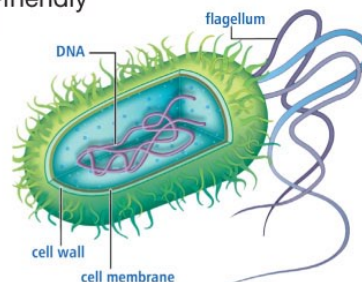


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Biomoda and EcoFashion: Ecological events at the American School Foundation of Puebla

*By Teresa Concha and Raymundo Fraga
Environmental Development Directors for Junior High and High School*

At the American School of Puebla there are a number of student associations dedicated to promoting environmental well-being within the school community. In the Junior High School the students participate in an environmental group and in the High School they are part of ASEC the American School Ecology Committee, which continues and enriches ecological activity the students have been involved with since preschool.

Students from both campuses participate in the creation and organization of various events. Amongst these are **Biomoda** and **EcoFashion** undertaken in Junior High and High School respectively. The students participate creatively in these events by making clothing from recycled or reused material.



The objective of **Biomoda** is to develop the students' creativity by reusing waste material in the making of suits, dresses and accessories, with the latest trends in ecological fashion in mind, and to build awareness around the culture of recycling.

Students participate in this event in teams of five, four of whom are designers and one of whom is the runway model. There are a number of criteria necessary for qualification. One such criterion is that the material must be used creatively while considering its ability to be modeled and the quality of the work.

The students who model will walk the runway as their teammates describe what materials were used in the fabrication of their accessories, clothing, shoes, hair adornments, hats, bags, belts, necklaces, pants, formal wear, wedding gowns etc.



The panel of judges will include fashion and environmental experts such as: designers, environmentalist, reporters, association representatives and teachers. The judges will use a rubric written by the students to evaluate the winners. Winning students will receive a prize and the right to participate in the **EcoFashion** event at the High School.

In High School, this event is called **EcoFashion** and it maintains the same objectives: to make creative clothing and accessories using recycled or reused materials. Students who make the clothing, stage and runway far in advance have held the event for the last six years at our school. They also garner the sponsorship of local businesses and organizations.

The students who win this event move on to participate in college forums and similar events. This year the winners appeared in **Sustainable Glamour 2013** brought together by local recycling businesses. Students won three first place prizes for the creativity and dressmaking skills visible in their work. Prizes included flat screen TVs, ipads and cellular phones.



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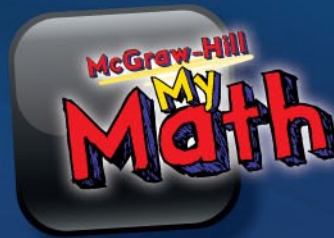
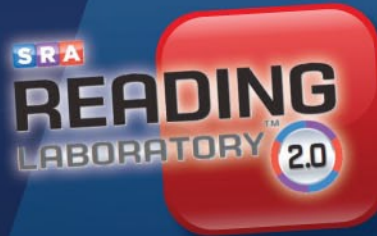


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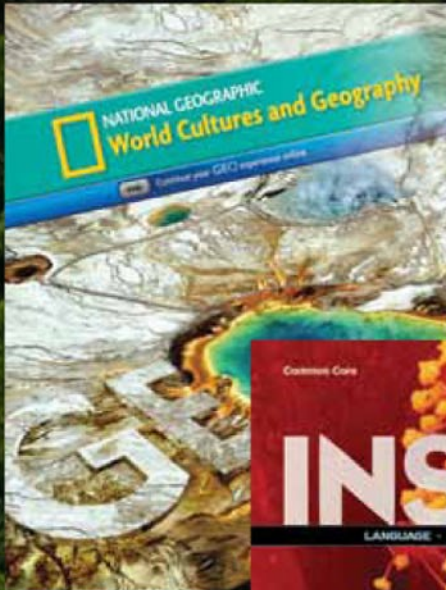
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Marshall Memo 530

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education

March 31, 2014

Thomas Guskey on Class Ranking and Valedictorians

In this thoughtful article in *Kappan*, University of Kentucky professor Thomas Guskey has a challenging question for schools: Is our purpose to select student talent or it to **develop** student talent? If the goal is selection, then we need to teach and assess in ways that spread out test scores, because that makes it easier to identify the most talented students. "Unfortunately for students, the best way to maximize differences in their learning is poor teaching," says Guskey. "Nothing does it better. If you want to accentuate the differences among students, then teach them as poorly as possible. A few students will be able to direct their own learning and achieve at a high level, regardless of what the teacher does. But the vast majority of students need guidance and direction in their learning."

If the purpose is **developing** talent, we need a completely different approach: clear learning goals and a full-court press to get all students to mastery. "Standards-based approaches are built on this premise," says Guskey. "In standards-based education environments, teachers and students unite in efforts to have everyone learn well."

He uses this logic to ask why so many high schools are still computing their graduating students' class rank. The process of using grade-point averages to rank-order students is clearly about selecting talent, he says: "Determining class rank does not help students achieve more or reach higher levels of proficiency..."

On the contrary, evidence indicates ranking students may diminish student motivation."

Why do high schools rank-order students? School administrators may believe it's because colleges and universities demand it, but a recent survey found that only 19 percent gave serious consideration to class rank. Most admissions officers consider the data fuzzy and unreliable because of tremendous variations in the way high schools compute GPAs. However, highly selective colleges do use class rank as a major factor. Why? Because ranking helps them select the most talented students. "The question for high-school educators, however, is this," says Guskey. "Is your purpose also to select talent? If that is not your job, then why do college and university admission officers' jobs for them? Why compute every graduate's class rank when ranking helps nobody but perhaps the very top-ranked students and could be hurting the majority?"

Guskey applies the same logic to the selection of class valedictorians. Most educators have abandoned the practice of "grading on the curve" because they realize that assessing students on their relative standing sets up unhealthy competition for the few high grades awarded by teachers (as well as creating disincentives to take art, music, and other "less serious" courses). But the same negative consequences occur in schools that choose the valedictorian based on the highest, weighted grade-point average. "This often results in aggressive and sometimes bitter competition among high-achieving students to be that top-ranked individual," says Guskey. "Gaining the honor

requires not simply high achievement; it requires outdoing everyone else in the class. And sometimes the difference among these top-achieving students is as little as one hundred thousandth of a decimal point in their weighted grade-point average.”

Some high schools have decided to identify the top 10 students, or the top 10 percent, but these are arbitrary cut-offs, says Guskey: “Regardless of the number or percent chosen, the result is the same. Excellence is not defined in terms of rigorous and challenging learning criteria. It is defined in terms of a student’s relative standing among classmates.”

Interestingly, the term valedictorian comes from the Latin **vale dicere**, which means “to say farewell.” Originally (beginning at Harvard College in 1759) a student was selected to deliver the farewell address at college commencement. For a time, these student commencement speakers were selected based on academic achievement, but colleges have moved away from that approach and generally choose them by a vote, by a merit system taking into account service projects and extracurricular activities, or by an essay competition. “Only high schools maintain the competitive practice of selecting the valedictorian based solely on students’ cumulative grade-point averages,” says Guskey.

How do valedictorians do after they graduate? A comprehensive 1995 study by Karen Arnold followed the careers of 81 valedictorians over 14 years and found that, although most had successful lives as accountants, physicians, lawyers, engineers, physical therapists, and healthcare professionals, few were risk takers or mold breakers. “They worked hard

and followed the rules,” says Guskey, “but rarely proposed innovations or explored unfamiliar areas.” The question he poses for educators is this: “Do current policies for selecting the class valedictorian foster development of the traits we most value in students?... Clearly, we should honor outstanding academic achievement, hard work, and perseverance in academic tasks. But what about service, caring, compassion, and a sense of social justice?... Do we want students who merely follow the rules, or do we want them to question the rules and propose ways to make the rules better?”

What’s the alternative? Guskey salutes a number of high schools that have adopted the college system of awarding diplomas at three levels of achievement – **cum laude**, **magna cum laude**, and **summa cum laude** – as measured by known standards of excellence, with the commencement speaker selected from among honorees. He also commends schools that select a non-fixed number of valedictorians (a Virginia high school recently chose 15) based on rigorous standards, not norm-referenced competition. Top honors should be awarded based on “clear models of excellence developed from standards that represent our highest aspirations and goals for students,” he concludes. “Educators more concerned with developing talent than selecting talent should take pride in helping the largest number of students possible meet these rigorous criteria and high standards of excellence. Students will too.”

“Class Rank Weighs Down True Learning” by Thomas Guskey in **Phi Delta Kappan**, March 2014 (Vol. 95, #6, p. 15-19), www.kappanmagazine.org; Guskey can be reached at guskey@uky.edu.



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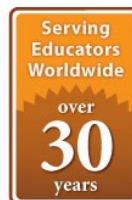
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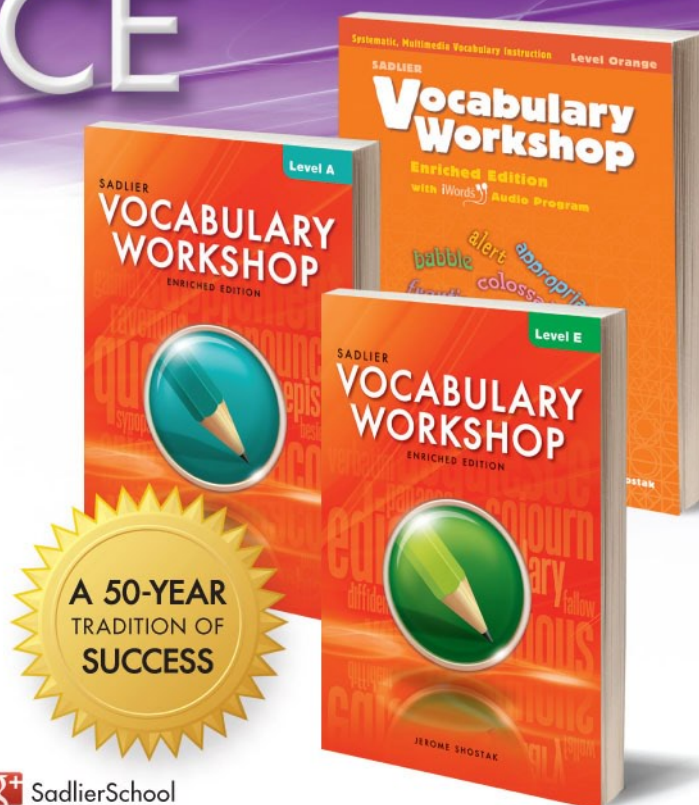
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Marshall Memo 528

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education

March 17, 2014

Attacking Summer Slide in Math

In this *School Library Journal* article, New York youth services coordinator Lisa Kropp cites a Duke University study showing that students' summer learning losses are greater for math than for reading – all students, wealthy and poor, lose about 2.6 months in their grade-level equivalency in computational ability over the summer months.

One way of countering this is Bedtime Math www.bedtimemath.org, a program that e-mails parents a daily math problem with three levels of questions: wee ones, little ones, and big ones. The questions all refer to the same story and get progressively more challenging.

Last summer, Bedtime Math teamed up with the Collaborative Summer Library Program to offer a math tie-in called "Summer of Numbers" <http://www.cslpreads.org>. Families can use math reading logs to track when children answer a math riddle, and these can be turned in for an incentive prize at participating libraries.

"Math? Yes, Math. In Summer" by Lisa Kropp in *School Library Journal*, March 2014 (Vol. 60, #3, p. 22), no e-link available.



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► From the Executive Director

I appreciate the schools and individuals who contributed pictures and articles for this edition of the newsletter. This year I hope to receive more entries from others schools in the region. This is a wonderful way to celebrate and share the important work that is taking place in your school, so I look forward to hearing from many of you!

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- Fall Edition: June 1, 2014

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