

John Rogers School Library: Philosophy, Policies, and Procedures

FAQ

Q: Does the John Rogers Library control the types of books that students may borrow?

A: The John Rogers Library supports the freedom to read. The school library is a unique haven where students may explore and inquire freely. School librarians are obligated to protect young people's First Amendment right to receive and read information and ideas. Our library collection is balanced, diverse, and reflective of multiple viewpoints. Children may choose any book on the shelf, especially if they explain their plan for reading it. (Often, the plan is to ask an adult or older sibling to read the book aloud at home.) I do support the search for literature that is "just right," both developmentally and in terms of content, but I also encourage students to read broadly, exploring a variety of literary genres and formats.

Two exceptions: (1) Early in the year, I guide kindergartners towards picture books, beginning readers, and beginning nonfiction. As the year proceeds, kindergartners have opportunities to explore the rest of the collection; (2) books with mature middle-school content are shelved separately, and are available to 5th graders only.

If you have concerns about what your child is borrowing from the library, please contact me in person or via email: nafisheralliso@seattleschools.org

Q. Should older students still be reading picture books?

A. YES! Picture books are tremendously powerful tools for conveying sophisticated concepts and information, not to mention compelling stories. Furthermore, picture books tend to have high reading levels.

Q: What is your position on the value of graphic novels?

A: I am a fan of graphic novels because they promote literacy. Our world is an increasingly visual one, with significant amounts of information embedded in images. By reading graphic literature (both fiction and non-fiction), children learn to decipher visual presentations of plot, setting, and character. They gain familiarity with onomatopoeia, and practice using both words and images to make meaning. Art Spiegelman and Francoise Mouly,

the creative duo behind TOON BOOKS (graphic novels for beginning readers), compelling describe the value of graphic texts:

“Comics have always had a unique ability to draw young readers into a story through the drawings. Visual narrative helps kids crack the code that allows literacy to flourish... Speech balloons facilitate a child's understanding of written dialogue as a transcription of spoken language. Many of the issues that emerging readers have traditionally struggled with are instantly clarified by comics' simple and inviting format.” (Source: <http://www.toon-books.com/our-mission.html>)

The John Rogers School Library will continue to maintain and expand its graphic collection because these materials support student learning. If you have doubts about the role of graphic literature, consider reading Art Spiegelman’s MAUS, the story of his father’s experiences during the Holocaust. Another excellent title is PERSEPOLIS by Marjane Satrapi, an autobiographical account of life in Iran during and after the reign of the shah.

Q: Does the library charge fines for overdue books?

A: We do not assess fines for overdue books. In our library, students are encouraged to be self-managers, especially regarding accountability for library loans. When books are overdue, I usually have a conversation with the student about where his or her books might be located. (Often, the books are sitting in their desks at school, or on a table at home.) Many of our children reside in more than one home, and I certainly don’t want to penalize students for the misplacement of library materials that often occurs in these situations. It is heartening to see how seriously our students take their library responsibilities. They are quite proud when they find a missing book; I am often met in the halls with enthusiastic cries of “I brought my book back!”

Q: What about lost or damaged books?

A: We must assess fines for lost materials, as these are public property. Options: Pay a fine; work off the fine (volunteer in library); “read off” the fine.