



NATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

ROBERT E. LEE HIGH SCHOOL
FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA

Each year, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) honors a single school or district-wide program with the National School Library Program of the Year (NSLPY) Award, sponsored by Follett. This award recognizes an exceptional program that meets the needs of the changing school and library environment, while being fully integrated into the school's curriculum. The 2018 award winner is Robert E. Lee High School in Springfield, Virginia. The school's library program, led by Mimi Marquet, Head Librarian, and Lisa Koch, Librarian, provides student-centered, equitable learning experiences that address the needs and interests of each student. In recognition of their achievement, the library program at Robert E. Lee was honored with an obelisk – the symbol of school library excellence – and \$10,000 for its school library program. But the story doesn't end there.

“Mimi and Lisa have transformed how our staff and students view the library and its purpose. This has resulted in our library becoming the hub of where learning takes place. No longer do we measure the effectiveness of our library program by the circulation numbers; it is measured by the impact on our instructional program and in our students' learning.”

DEIRDRE LAVERY

*Principal
Robert E. Lee High School*



Robert E. Lee High School is an accredited International Baccalaureate® (IB) World School that serves more than 1,700 students in Grades 9-12. One of the smallest high schools in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Robert E. Lee has a very diverse student body. Its students speak more than 25 languages and represent over 61 countries. The school's mission is to prepare students to be global citizens by challenging them academically, connecting school learning to their futures and providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. The Robert E. Lee school library and school librarians are critical to ensuring the mission succeeds.

"Mimi and Lisa know their students as individuals and put them first," said Priscille Dando, Coordinator, Library Information Services, FCPS Instructional Services Department. "Their student-centered approach makes advocacy for their program proactive and meaningful, because it's about supporting students for success in school and beyond. Outreach for collaboration is then naturally a core value because working in partnership with administration, teachers and colleagues in other schools is common practice, and what's best for kids."

To earn the coveted 2018 NSLPY Award, Marquet and Koch worked with the entire school community, including the principal, administrative team, library assistant, collaborative teaching partners, students and parents to make the Robert E. Lee library a dynamic, welcoming place. "We made it our priority to ensure that every student entering the library would find something they could relate to and would feel comfortable asking questions, being curious and engaging freely with the resources," Marquet said. "We're all about student-centered learning, equity and access."

For example, to engage learners and help them learn 21st-century skills, Marquet and Koch developed a school-wide "Hour of Code" event with a curriculum for classes with and without devices. Instructions for the event were provided in multiple languages so that every student could fully participate. In another collaborative project, they recruited all social studies teachers and students to participate in a service-learning opportunity that included writing letters of gratitude to active-duty military or veterans.

Marquet and Koch also coordinate the school-wide reading program designed to foster a sense of

"Completing the NSLYP award application provided a lot of opportunity for reflection. We definitely grew in awareness of our strengths and the areas where there is potential for growth. This type of deep reflection puts us in a great position as we move forward. We are excited to begin the work of implementing AASL's new national library standards and design new ways for students to think, create, share and grow."

MIMI MARQUET
Head Librarian
Robert E. Lee High School

community. All student and staff members were given a copy of congressman John Lewis's Civil Rights memoir *March*. In addition to leading book discussions, the school librarians developed monthly supporting lessons for teachers, created videos and established an art installation.

THE IMPACT OF BEING NAMED NATIONAL LIBRARY PROGRAM OF THE YEAR

Winning what Marquet describes as “the Academy Award” for school libraries was deeply meaningful.

“Receiving this award validates the work we have done so far and energizes us to keep going,” Marquet said. “We could not have won without the help and support of our librarian cohort in Fairfax County. As honored as we are to be recognized for the work we do, we feel that as a part of a large cohort of librarians (over 200 librarians in Fairfax County) who generously share, inspire and challenge us every day to be the best that we can be, we share this award with all of our FCPS librarian colleagues.”

“My favorite part of the award process came during the awards committee visit, which included groups where students and teachers shared how the library program had impacted learning,” Koch added. “Afterward, one student, a non-native English speaker who has overcome so much, came up to me privately and told me that she wants to help people too by becoming a school librarian. This is

“We would not be here without the support of the community. Our school community, including our principal, Deirdre Lavery, our administrative team, our collaborative teaching partners, our students, parents and our wonderful library assistant who always keeps student experience at the forefront and helps us stay on course.”

LISA KOCH

Librarian
Robert E. Lee High School

why we do the work we do. I will hold onto that moment for the rest of my life.”

“Marquet and Koch ensure every student achieves the outcomes of our ‘Portrait of a Graduate’ framework,” said Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Scott Braband.

“Their use of an inquiry approach to learning and their leadership in blended learning has increased student engagement and fostered a deeply collaborative culture among instructional staff. They are leaders who create a dynamic library atmosphere that engages the entire school community.”

“It was such a great pleasure to be able to view such a strong and vibrant library program,” said Ken Stewart, award committee chair.

“When asked to describe the program, teachers and administrators both shared one common thought – infiltrating! As they discussed the program, we could see how the library was infused – actually infiltrated – into every corner of the school community. It’s seeing spirited and energetic school library programs such as this that makes me proud to be a school librarian!”

AASL President Steven Yates added, “Lisa Koch and Mimi Marquet are committed to creating an open, supportive library environment where student curiosity flourishes. The Robert E. Lee High School library invites students to engage and explore through participatory installations, student art displays and a wide variety of student activity stations. As educators, Ms. Koch and Ms. Marquet focus on student-centered learning, meeting the needs of a diverse student population and building teacher-librarian collaborations. The library’s impact reaches far beyond the library walls through a thoughtfully curated website and events such as a school-wide ‘Hour of Code’ program.”



For Koch, the award represented a big professional achievement. “I’m excited about the opportunity the award gives us to represent school libraries and to represent our District and really connect with school libraries all over,” she said. “The \$10,000 award is a transformative amount of money for a school library, and we look forward to the opportunities it will bring to our students and school. Thank you, Follett!”

Marquet was equally appreciative. “I am grateful to Follett for their sponsorship of AASL’s NSLPY award. Every day, librarians in schools across the country work to engage student curiosity and develop the skills needed for the next generation to become ethical users of information, global citizens and life-long learners. While we are proud of our accomplishments, we feel that the award was possible because we work in such an ecosystem of excellence. We were very well supported on all levels – at the school level, by our principal and administrators, by Library Services in Fairfax County Public Schools and by Fairfax County itself.”

