

NEWS: For Immediate Release

Pine Grove Middle School named National School Library Program of the Year

CHICAGO – Pine Grove Middle School, located in East Syracuse, N.Y., is the American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) 2011 National School Library Program of the Year (NSLPY) Award recipient. Sponsored by Follett Library Resources, the NSLPY recognizes school library programs that meet the needs of the changing school and library environment and are fully integrated into the school's curriculum. Each recipient receives \$10,000 toward its school library program.

The mission of the Pine Grove Middle School reads that the school “will prepare students for the 21st-Century by engaging all learners in meaningful learning experiences that meet the highest educational and ethical standards in a caring, collaborative learning community supported through partnerships with parents and families, businesses, civic organizations and higher education.” Making the school library highly visible outside of the confines of the school by participating in these partnerships is a goal of Pine Grove’s school librarian, Susan Kowalski.

“I take advantage of every opportunity to reach out to stakeholders,” Kowalski explains in the application. “I connect in the traditional formats (email, faculty meetings, department meetings) and also the less than usual (sporting events, ski club, band concerts, local businesses) to learn and advocate.” Kowalski keeps the school’s administration up-to-date with all library happenings. Several of the administrators are signed up to receive daily text message updates about library events. She also compiles a monthly report – which includes text and a video summary of the month’s highlights – to hand out to principals, the district cabinet and board members.

“Sue Kowalski is a leader in learning and strives to always be where the students can receive and learn information effectively,” said Betty Marcoux, award committee chair. “Whether an activity within the community or school, a lesson on the field or in the classroom, she drives the experience toward meaningful learning experiences with high, challenging expectations that both students and teachers will benefit from this experience in ways that will challenge them to grow even better in their futures.”

The program’s primary stakeholder is its students - and the students are excelling. They remain engaged by being encouraged to provide feedback to help shape their library experience, and, in return, Kowalski finds the students are the program’s strongest advocates. “Most often teachers, parents, and administrators hear from students about what’s going on in the library,” she notes. “This turnkey advocacy is critical. If advocacy only comes from me, we aren’t making the necessary impact. Advocacy needs to come from all those invested in the program.”

Pine Grove Middle School and other AASL award recipients will be honored at AASL's Awards Luncheon during ALA's 2011 Annual Conference in New Orleans. The luncheon will be held Monday, June 27, and Lauren Myracle, best-selling young adult author and national spokesperson for intellectual freedom, will headline. Ticket information can be found on the AASL website at <http://www.ala.org/aasl/annual>.

Established in 1963, the NSLPY Award honors school library programs practicing their commitment to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information, as well as exemplifying implementation of AASL’s learning standards and program guidelines. The award recognizes exemplary school library programs that are fully integrated into the school's curriculum. Each winning program receives an obelisk – the symbol of school library excellence – and a \$10,000 prize donated by Follett Library Resources. Learn more about each of these school library media programs at <http://www.ala.org/aasl/awards>.

The American Association of School Librarians, www.aasl.org, a division of the American Library Association (ALA), promotes the improvement and extension of library services in elementary and secondary schools as a means of strengthening the total education program. Its mission is to advocate excellence, facilitate change and develop leaders in the school library field.

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