

Weaving with Themes II

As I did with the article published on November 4 (“Weaving with Themes”), which is archived with others of this series at <https://www.wlnonline.orgm> and <https://www.murrysvillelibrary.org>, it’s time to highlight major themes running through the last dozen or so of The Magic Library Card! series of articles.

There are two underlying threads dominating these more recent articles as relates to our world of public libraries. One is the upward arc of available streaming content, both in the Arts and for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), as a tool for in-library (or library-directed) entertainment and learning. The other is standards-based learning, where that can be most rigorously addressed in the context of either the Scientific Method, or the national and PA Common Core Standards. The Common Core has been widely prescribed for formal or scholastic education, but not generally for informal education, meaning for museums and libraries.

I’ve already told you a lot about archived streaming content rapidly becoming available as the COVID-19 crisis drives that forward. Since then, National Theatre Live in London has adopted the Stratford Festival at-home subscription model (<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/ntathome>). Both are able to do this, as preeminent international players in the Arts, with access to filmed live plays, whereas smaller players such as the Pittsburgh Public Theater and the Williamstown Theatre Festival in Massachusetts (<https://wtfestival.org>), apparently lacking an archive of filmed productions, are offering play readings or audio plays, respectively.

I haven’t been too specific about the Common Core before, so here is more, from the Pennsylvania Department of Education “Fact Sheet: PA Academic Standards and the Common Core.”

“Pennsylvania, like most other states, began implementing standards-based education in the mid-1990s. Prior to this, the state had no academic expectations for its students.”

“The establishment of state education standards has always been – and remains – under the jurisdiction of each state.”

“A multi-state effort began as early as 2004 to determine if common standards in math and English could be identified. Several years later, the formal effort was coordinated by two entities representing state leaders in education policy: (1) National Governors Association (NGA) – which represents all states’ chief executives, and (2) Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) – which represents every states’ top government official overseeing education (in Pennsylvania, this official is the Secretary of Education).

“NGA and CCSSO worked in collaboration with state officials, teachers, parents and other interested parties across the country to develop model standards in math and English for states to consider using. These model standards are now referred to as Common Core.”

There’s a lot more to add, such as the development of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), by a different path, but still with collaboration coming from the states. My point for now is that all this was done with schools in mind, but public libraries also need to buy in, as a path to higher relevance and future growth. They need to learn how to routinely do reading clubs framed by the scholastic standards, so as to become a fuller partner with schools, and a better complement, especially during out-of-school summertime.

Storytime STEM-packs™ was done this way, standards based, as I have previously described (archive: September 7 and 16, 2020), but there is much more to do to build a richer Common Core and NGSS experience in WLN libraries for kids. I am writing as a proponent for that. The next three articles will have more to say about learning through library programs.

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