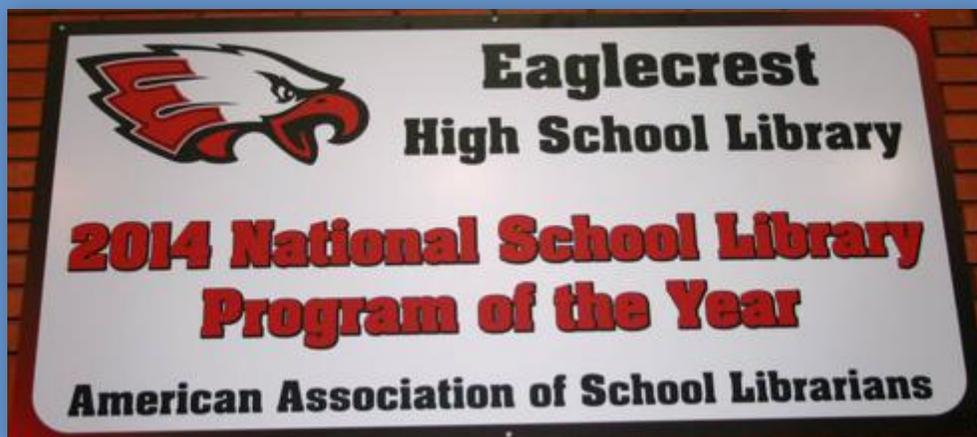


THE 2014 NATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM OF THE YEAR

BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES (AASL) SPONSORED BY FOLLETT SCHOOL SOLUTIONS



STRONG LIBRARIES
Eaglecrest High School
CENTENNIAL | COLORADO

At Eaglecrest High School in Centennial, Colorado, librarians do so much more than check out books and monitor the behavior of the student patrons. They are an integral part of the learning at the school of about 2,700 students, helping teachers with curriculum design and driving instruction. That's part of the reason Eaglecrest earned the title of 2014 National School Library Program of the Year by the American Association of School Librarians, and sponsored by Follett. The award comes with \$10,000 to use toward the library program.

“I feel fortunate at Eaglecrest. We own our school vision, and the library is at the center. It provides for our students to have collegiate success.”

GWEN HANSEN-VIGIL
Principal, Eaglecrest High School.



“The work that happens here just permeates the building in raising standards of academics,” said Gwen Hansen-Vigil, principal. “That’s because Kristin McKeown and Hollie Hawkins are not only certified teacher librarians but also teacher leaders who have helped establish research guidelines for the whole school.”

McKeown, library coordinator, and Hawkins, teacher librarian, were thrilled when they learned their program had been recognized by AASL and Follett, proving their dedication had paid off in making the library so much more than a place to ‘grab a book.’ In addition to the AASL award, achievement and test scores had improved, as well as teacher collaboration. “We try to integrate ourselves within every aspect of the school community and be a support system for teachers and students, whether it’s for reading material (pleasure and academic), research skills, or just a safe, quiet place to work and think,” said Hawkins.

McKeown joined the school in 2006, and immediately set the

library and the role of librarians on a path of transformation and improvement. “It took some time to build strong collaborative partnerships with our colleagues, and as these partnerships grew, our school-wide integration grew, as well,” she said. Back in 2006, the “old library” was less open and welcoming, less academic in its atmosphere, and less user-friendly for teaching, McKeown explained. “We now have an enclosed computer lab for teaching research lessons,” she said (lessons were previously taught to students at computer “pods” on the library floor), “and our most beautiful section of the library, the atrium, is now a student-focused space. Previously it housed our entire

fiction section with far less student seating and workspace.”

In addition to making the library more student-focused and welcoming (natural light and open space makes it feel less confined and dark), McKeown wanted to give the library a more academic atmosphere. “Students now check in with their ID cards, and we also promote reading and books more effectively, with monthly displays, a new books table, and our student-starred books section of the library—kind of like a VIP section for students’ favorite books,” she said.

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“Our passion for reading and enthusiasm for igniting passion in our students and colleagues is one of our greatest strengths. The fact that we’ve intentionally cultivated relationships with teachers and staff throughout the building is the scaffolding our programming is built on.”

KRISTIN MCKEOWN

Library Coordinator, Eaglecrest High School

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Hawkins described how they have been able to position the library as a 'go-to source' for teachers and leadership by consistently working to create a school-wide culture of reading, and by implementing programs like Thinking Maps and Complex Text work. McKeown agreed. "The process was slow, but each small, successful change led to another way to improve the program." Soon, people started to notice.

As things began to change and reading comprehension improved among the student body, the new and improved library was soon recognized as a Highly Effective Library Program by the Colorado Department of Education.

While much of the library's transition has impacted the way staff interacts and operates, an additional benefit has been student achievement. The school's ACT reading scores reveal noticeable and steady improvement since the transformation of the library. "In 2007, there was an average of 3.6 books per student checked out from the library, and at that time our average ACT reading score was 18.8," said McKeown. "Today, there is an average of 6.9 books per student checked out

from the library, with an average ACT reading score of 20.2. While I must admit this is all a bit beyond my "mathletic" ability, what we found is by studying the data is that there is a strong, positive, linear association between our books per student and our ACT reading scores. The correlation between the two data sets is 0.94 (1.0 being the highest).

This means the average book checkouts/student data is a *strong predictor* of our average ACT reading scores, AND, would indicate that for every 2.5 additional books (on average) a student checks out, we would predict the average ACT reading score to go up by one full point!"

As certified teachers, both McKeown and Hawkins are thrilled with the improvement in ACT scores. Their influence goes beyond reading comprehension. Both McKeown and Hawkins guide classes in the computer lab at the library every school day, with a focus on research and presentation. For example, the library staff has worked to develop research assignments such as the freshman biology disease project and the US history research paper for sophomores. The key is they



collaborated with other teachers in the school. "A typical day in our library includes both teachers and students," said McKeown. "It's definitely busy and lively, but at the same time, it's a calm and academic atmosphere." While students use the library for studying and reading before school, there are often school meetings or events taking place, including receptions, art shows, and planning period meetings, taking place.





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McKeown and Hawkins are proud of winning the Follett-sponsored AASL award, and know the \$10,000 prize will be invaluable as they continue to build a program focused on student achievement and educator collaboration. "Our passion for reading and enthusiasm for igniting passion in our students and colleagues is one of our greatest strengths. The fact that we've intentionally cultivated relationships with teachers and staff throughout the building is the scaffolding our programming is built on. Whether it's a literacy initiative, research standards, or a fun library program, if teachers and staff aren't willing to participate and support it, it won't be successful."



When told of the award, the entire school was surprised and ecstatic, said Hawkins. "I was overwhelmed with excitement and pride for our library and school. We were so excited to share the fantastic news with our students, staff, and community. The award really gave us a sense of accomplishment and validation for the hard work we do every day."

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