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From the OASL President's iPad

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From the OASL President's iPad

by Nancy Sullivan



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For over a dozen years during my career as a school librarian, I have been lucky enough to have served students from kindergarten through 12th grade. I currently work in a marvelous, challenging, and hectic urban high school setting in Northeast Portland. When I think about the theme of this issue and I remember back to the kindergarten, first, and second graders I taught years ago, the main difference that stands out in my mind between elementary and high school students is probably not what you would expect. It's the hugs.

Kindergartners absolutely love and cherish their school librarian. They are just learning about stories and story time and the magic of the library. They are just learning that we can help feed their endless hunger for information and that they can explore new worlds through picture books. They're just starting to learn how to use the nonfiction section and that there is a structure to all this information. So they love you. And hug you. You are the person they associate with this fantastic and wonderful place.

By middle school you might get a hug during field day on the final day of school. Hormones are kicking in. Emotions are all over the place. There is drama ... drama ... and more ... drama. These kids are still excited about books and all they hold but they are often too wrapped up in themselves and navigating their interpersonal relationships to even think about your role as their information advocate. Although, you still are a good source of book recommendations, some counseling, encouragement, and more.

By the time students get to high school there's just no hugging, but there is a nice handshake at graduation. There is a lot of serious research, learning about themselves, their world, and their place in it; relearning how the library is organized because they forgot everything that they knew before. You start to see the people they will become as they come to terms with their flaws, experience lots of different relationship dynamics, broaden their thinking, and manage to keep their idealism mostly intact throughout.

I had a rare opportunity to spend the day at Mt. Hood Community College a few years ago. It was unexpected, but lo and behold, during the tour of the



library I spied some of my former students. I was so pleased to see them using their college library. I peeled off from the tour to touch base ... and got hugs!

Libraries of all sizes and types are important in our patrons' lives from preschool (and hopefully even before) through every stage of childhood and adulthood. I'm so proud to be part of a profession that brings reading and passion for information to people of all sorts and all ages. Our patrons see themselves represented in our collections in many diverse ways including language, race, gender, and ability. Our libraries are a place to feel safe, become informed, create content, come together, and feel welcomed. Keep up the good work! 

