

Greg Baker

**Sample School Board Address:  
A case for the acquisition of audio books for Toocoolfor Elementary School**

With the ever-growing diversity of our school community, we as school librarians are in the unique position of teaching a diverse range of students. As educators, parents, and community members, we are all aware of the necessity of catering to all learners. Unfortunately, the library is ill-equipped to do so not because we lack desire or skill, but because we are limited by the district's selection policy which clearly states that print, not audio books, should be the singular focus of the library collection. As our library budgets are approved according to these guidelines, we either ignore our overwhelming need for audio books, or we go on unfunded.

According to longtime educator Neil Fleming's VAK Learning Model, there are three types of learners that must be recognized in the classroom: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic. In our school, visual learners' needs are met with our diverse collection of print materials. The kinesthetic learners are stimulated by hands-on activities. Unfortunately, the only auditory learning opportunities come in the form of direct instruction. It is unacceptable to overlook close to one third of our student population when our district's mission states: "We, as a learning institution, strive to meet the diverse educational needs of ALL students..." By not providing a means with which our auditory learners can better learn, we are failing in our mission.

We understand that, with the current state of our economy, the district is doing everything in its power to continue to run the schools on a minimal budget. This is something we can all appreciate, though the cost of an audio book is not much more than a hardcover novel. However, the issue is not just budgetary, but philosophical as well. Many of the district administrators believe that listening to an audio book is not reading and therefore has no place in our schools. We do not dispute the fact that literacy should be major focus in our curriculum with reading

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skills at the forefront. On the other hand, research shows that nearly 80% of a child's knowledge is gained through listening.

**B**olstering our collection with a strong selection of audio books will benefit not only the auditory learners, but also our reluctant readers and English Language Learners (ELLs). Toocoolfor School recently had a family of Japanese born immigrants move in to our area. The students, a second grade girl and a fifth grade boy, have a limited knowledge of English. They can understand spoken English, but are struggling to learn to read and write in their new language. As of now, they are at a standstill in their education because we do not have the means with which to fully educate these students. Now, not only are they stuck academically, but we are stunting their social growth by having to pull them from their homerooms for ELL lessons.

**O**ur fellow educators in other districts have shown marked improvement from the use of audio books with ELL students. They have found that the students greatly improved their vocabulary, pronunciation, and enunciation skills. Struggling readers are better able to comprehend the words on the page when they can hear them at the same time. Audio books have also proven to be an amazing tool to motivate reluctant readers. If audio books can do all this, why do we continue to view them as a lesser literacy tool?

**P**lease help us complete our mission of meeting all of our student's needs by allocating a portion of the library budget for audio books. By providing a suitable learning environment for our diverse population of students we are ensuring that they are given the opportunity to succeed.

Yours in teaching and learning,  
Greg Baker  
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