

# Availability

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

## Vs. Self-Centeredness

### I WILL:

- put others ahead of myself
- find a way to help, not a way to hide
- be ready when I'm called
- be glad for the chance to serve
- check with the right person before I make commitments

*Robin Castetter is a Retired Elementary Teacher, Loveland City Schools*

### Making my own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I serve

#### Pre – Grade 3:

##### How Do I Stand in Your Shoes by Susan DeBell

Miranda Peabody had no patience for the other students in class and just didn't understand why they couldn't be as smart and talented as she was. Her teacher, Mrs. Klemp, suggested that she try to understand other people by "standing in their shoes." After much searching, she learns the true meaning of "standing in someone else's shoes" and having empathy for others.

##### Just Grace by Charise Mericle Harper

Grace loves cats. She also loves drawing them and photographing them. No So Super comics. She doesn't like Sammy Stringer, a boy in her class. She has lots of ideas, and when her cat goes missing, Grace does her best to make Mrs. Luther feel less lonely. As the mystery continues, Grace's well-intentioned plan backfires, and she finds herself in a bit of trouble. Maybe Sammy Stringer will help her through.

##### Looking After Louis by Lesley Ely

"There's a new boy at school called Louis. Louis sits next to me and I look out for him. He's not quite like the rest of us. Sometimes I wonder what he's thinking about. He often just sits and stares at the wall. If I ask him what he's looking at, he says, 'Looking at,' and keeps on looking." Louis has autism, but through his imagination, kindness, and a special game of soccer, his classmates find a way to join him in his world. Then they can include Louis in theirs.

#### Grades 4 – 8:

##### Masterpiece by Elise Broach

Marvin lives with his family under the kitchen sink in the Pompadays' apartment. He is very much a beetle. James Pompaday lives with his family in New York City. He is very much an eleven-year-old boy. After James gets a pen-and-ink set for his birthday, Marvin surprises him by creating an elaborate miniature drawing. James gets all the credit for the picture and before these unlikely friends know it they are caught up in a staged art heist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that could help recover a famous drawing by Albrecht Dürer. But James can't go through with the plan without Marvin's help. And that's where things get really complicated (and interesting!). This fast-paced mystery will have young readers on the edge of their seats as they root for boy and beetle.



# Robin's Reading List



## **Rules** by Cynthia Lord

"No toys in the fish tank" is one of many rules that 12-year-old Catherine shares with her autistic younger brother, David, to help him understand his world. Lots of the rules are practical. Others are more subtle and shed light on issues in Catherine's own life. Torn between love for her brother and impatience with the responsibilities and embarrassment he brings, she strives to be on her parents' radar and to establish an identity of her own. At her brother's clinic, Catherine befriends a wheelchair-bound boy, Jason, who talks by pointing at word cards in a communication notebook. Her drawing skills and additional vocabulary cards--including "whatever" (which prompts Jason to roll his eyes at his mother)--enliven his speech. While Catherine has her own issues, she often puts her own needs aside to help her brother as well as her friend Jason.

## **City of Orphans** by Avi

The streets of 1893 New York are full of life: crowded, filthy, dangerous. If you are a newsboy like thirteen-year-old Maks Geless, you need to watch out for Bruno, leader of the Plug Ugly Gang whose shadowy, sinister boss is plotting to take control of all the newsies on the lower East Side. With Bruno's boys in fierce pursuit, Maks discovers Willa, a strange girl who lives alone in an alley. It is she, stick in hand, who fights off the Plug Uglies. Yet further dangers await. Maks must find a way to free his sister Emma from The Tombs, the city jail where she has been imprisoned for stealing a watch at the glamorous new Waldorf Hotel. Maks, believing her innocent, has only four days to prove it. Fortunately, there is Bartleby Donck, the eccentric lawyer (among other employments) to guide Maks and Willa in the art of detection. Set against a backdrop alive with the sights and sounds of tenement New York, Maks, as boy detective, must confront a teeming world of wealth and crime, while struggling against powerful forces threatening new immigrants and the fabric of family love.

## **Indigo's Star** by Hilary McKay

The endearing and eccentric Casson family is back. Recovered from mononucleosis, 12-year-old Indigo dreads his return to school where his sensitive, peace-loving nature makes him a target for bullies. Enter Tom, a classmate from America who is living with his English grandmother to avoid dealing with his divorced parents. His arrogance stymies the gang and deflects some of the mistreatment away from Indigo, who sees through Tom's mask and reaches out in friendship. Meanwhile, eight-year-old Rose cannot adjust to her new glasses or accept her father's apparently permanent move to London. She expresses her distress in her poignant, yet funny, letters to him and by painting family members and friends in and out of a mural on the kitchen wall. Rose, too, forms a bond with Tom, particularly appreciating his guitar playing and his desire to acquire a special instrument. In an incident in which he mistakenly believes the bullies are hurting Rose, Indigo finally fights back, giving the gang leader his comeuppance and setting the "rabble" on the road to good behavior.

## **Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad** by Ann Petry

Born a slave, Harriet Tubman dreamed of freedom. Through hard work and her willingness to risk everything--including her life--she was able to make that dream come true. After making her escape, Harriet realized that her own freedom was not enough. So she became a conductor on the Underground Railroad, and devoted her life to helping others make the journey out of bondage. An invisible threat to plantation owners, she served as a symbol of strength and inspiration for her people. She was the legendary "Moses," delivering hundreds from the desert of slavery.

# Robin's Reading List

## Grades 9 – 12:

### **Mockingbird** by Kathryn Erskine

In Caitlin's world, everything is black or white. Things are good or bad. Anything inbetween is confusing. That's the kind of thing Caitlin's older brother, Devon, has always explained. Now Devon is dead, and Dad is no help at all. Caitlin wants to get over it, but as an eleven year old girl with Aspergers, she doesn't know how. When she reads the definition of closure, she realizes that is what she needs. In her search for it, Caitlin discovers that everything is not black and white, and the world is full of colors, messy and beautiful.

### **Sing to the Dawn** by Minfong Ho

When she wins a scholarship competition, a young Thai village girl faces the hostility of her brother who places second and her father who feels the city school is no place for a girl.

### **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** by Maya Angelou

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local "powhitetrash." At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by an older man, and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns about love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors ("I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare") will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned.

### **Superfoot** by Janet Gingold

Adam Clarke hates hospitals. Doctors and pills make him sick. He just wants to play soccer. But since surgical complications after a leg injury left him lopsided, he can't run. Sometimes he can't even breathe. His life is in slow motion. His parents think he's impossible, his sisters think he's pathetic, his classmates think he's a joke and his teachers just shake their heads about his deteriorating schoolwork. Even his best friend has given up on him. Then, when his grandparents arrive for a prolonged stay, Adam gets forced into spending some quality time with his grandfather. What he discovers as he learns to put himself in other people's shoes will change his life.

