This action research project will examine the content of reading material in a first grade classroom to determine if the books available to the students are a good match for their reading and interest levels. The inventory will count the number of books per reading level, and will also tally the range of genres, diversity of topics and current representation of titles. After the inventory and interviews with students, the collection will be calibrated (through weeding and purchasing) to better match their needs. Students will then have the volume, access and choice of reading material to help them grow as readers.

The project aims to examine the question: Are the collections of books in our classroom libraries sufficient, varied and appealing enough to feed the range of readers in each room? Does this tailored, curated collection lead to reading growth for all students? This problem is important to me because I know, from experience, and from research, that for students to grow as readers, they need volume, access and choice of reading material. They need volume, because reading is how they become better readers, but if students can’t find the right books to read, they won’t read. Students need access to books, books and more books. Students need choice from amongst a range of titles that align with their interests and abilities. 

The idea for this project came about after attending the MRA Summer Leadership Workshop in July 2017. Annie Ward, co-author with Stephanie Harvey of the new book From Striving to Thriving, spoke about the book project in her school where she inventoried book bins in classrooms and found a disconnect between what was in the bins and the actual reading needs of the students. She shared her blueprint for a classroom library that was responsive to the interests and abilities of the students.
Specialists Collaboration to Support Content Literacy
Janice Torvi, Pamela Allard, Monica Carty, Angela Sheerin, and Lori Tasick  Blackstone-Millville Regional School District

How can specialists improve on the problem of addressing the depth of the core content standards while planning their lessons? This is important to us because working in isolation in our specialties tends to detach students from the content during their specials periods and impede continuity of learning. We plan to implement a model of collaboration between the three departments: literacy, technology, and art, to help reinforce content instruction and give children opportunities to inquire and explore in a variety of ways about the same topic. We aim to include the use of digital literacy, artistic models and visual arts, and writing and reading skills to support inquiry, research and higher-order thinking. We have met to facilitate a chart for the continuum of learning that can be shared by each department. In this way teachers can “plug in” their ideas to ascertain if all activities are connected to the goals of the project topic. Students in grades K-5 will participate in a variety of lessons and activities as a result of a collaboration of their specialists within their own classrooms. Each project aims at building on the content taught in their homerooms and meeting common core standards.

We will be analyzing student performance to collect data on the outcomes of learning content in various specialties as well as performance with the standards. Student outcomes are a vital part of the success of our collaboration. All student data and team examinations of the model will help us determine the success of our collaboration and then move forward with future topics to address literacy, art, and technology standards around a common theme.