

CRITERIA FOR BOOK SELECTION:

- Curriculum Linked
- Quality Materials (award winning, structure, glossary, index, etc., print, illustrations, content, binding, genre)
- Copyright Date
- Reading Level (reluctant reader, emergent reader, teen issues)
- Diversity (gender, disabilities, race, religion, social issues)
- Canadian
- Popularity (topical, high interest)



They responded to the many suggestions for heavy hitter book titles submitted by students, teachers, curriculum consultants, community leaders and Canadian authors. The massive amount of data collected was managed in an enormous database created by library technician Liz Geier. The team created criteria by which all resources were assessed and, in the end, the team purchased more than 67,000 of the best books available to elementary children in Ontario. Based on school population and need, each GECD SB elementary school received between 500 and 1200 books.

(See the ELRI web site http://www.gecdsb.on.ca/sub/schools/ele/soothwoo/elementary_library_resourc.htm. Or visit ELRI \$1 Million Worth of Books at www.gecdsb.on.ca.)

The Elementary Library Resource Initiative's second phase is now in the planning stages. In order to address the needs of a teacher-librarian in every school, a large scale professional development program will begin for these individuals in September 2003. Administration issues such as running automated circulation and cataloguing will be addressed, as will effective methods to best utilize the new book titles in supporting the curriculum and classroom teachers. Sessions will also be focused on collection weeding, feeding, protection and repair.

A third phase of the Initiative will celebrate the literacy connections between students, books, authors, reading and writing during the spring of 2004.

Project leader, Mike Budd, sees this as the most exciting and important project of his career as a teacher consultant. "My hat is off to our principals who wisely identified the rejuvenation of their school libraries as their number one priority. The trustees and senior administration have made some enlightened decisions and budgeting to make this happen."

Excitement over what the GECD SB is doing with the ELRI project seems to be growing beyond the borders of Essex County. As John and Carol Saunders of Saunders Book Company say, "The GECD SB initiative is a ray of hope for publishers." Recently, several school boards who have heard about the initiative have contacted GECD SB for details. It would seem that the pendulum is picking up momentum. ■