**Notes for AMA Breakout Room with Sarah Bagshaw (Readers’ Advisory)**

Sarah is an acting Children’s Librarian in Mount Pleasant location of Vancouver Public Library; before that, worked at Kidsbooks where did lots of readers advisory

Session participants include staff from West Vancouver Memorial Library / Port Moody Public Library, Surrey Libraries (3 participants), Fraser Valley Regional Library (Chilliwack and Sardis), Fraser Valley Regional Library (Ladner), Sechelt Public Library

**Suggested resource for building collections**

Aside from Publisher Weekly, School Library Journal, Entertainment Weekly and other common ways to access book reviews, a useful resource is kidsbooks.ca booklists (on Kidsbooks home page)

* mix of new and old books
* can also hit “browse” and look at future releases, recent releases, etc and look at Juvenile Fiction etc. to see what Kidsbooks has ordered in
* If there are a lot of copies “In store” it’s because someone decided it was worth ordering for sales, so might be something to have in your library
* Can give a good idea of what new books are good to consider for purchase

**How do you find the best book for person standing in front of you?**

May have brave child who approaches knowing what they want (looking for specific item or new suggestion)

* If you don’t have their specific request on shelf, can be great starting point to learn preferences and reading level

May also have parent approach you with child

* Try to have conversation more with child than adult, look at child when speaking (can go well or not depending on parent’s reaction)
* Ask child “what kinds of books do you like” AND “what kind of books would you like today”
* Often adult will take over even though you asked child; sometimes may even make negative comments (“they’re not a reader” etc)
  + can be difficult to navigate
  + still try to talk to kid and get them to engage
  + if it has been vocalized they’re not a reader, tell them “you just haven’t found the right book yet”
  + if adult says “they only read graphic novels/audiobooks/etc,” you can use as opportunity to talk about benefits of those forms

Key pieces of information include:

* their age and grade (doesn’t necessarily tell you their reading level, but gives rough sense)
* what they’ve read recently (or if they haven’t read recently)
* What they’re looking for today
* Use that info to continue the interview

At Kidsbooks, staff did readers’ advisory and also shelved books, so they knew where books were; harder at VPL because fiction collection floats between locations

If roving, walk over to appropriate section to scan shelves and see what’s there to pull and share

Always give more than they would expect to leave with, but tell them you are doing that so they don’t get overwhelmed and think you expect them to take all

* Tell them if none suit them they can always come back for more suggestions

**Scenario: Little girl approaches with caregiver, looks maybe grade 2 and is shy, parent wants her to pick books. What do you do? (answers below were generated during discussion)**

* Ask what they read recently that they really liked; if don’t respond, ask about favourite tv show, movie, characters (books may tie in to that)
* **She says “My Little Pony”**
  + ask questions to figure out reading level (other books the child has read, what grade they’re in at school, etc)
  + have more of a conversation to get sense of reading level; if hand them graphic novel and it’s too difficult for instance they might be overwhelmed (or parent may not want them to have graphic novel, etc)
  + can pull items off shelf and tell them to give you thumbs up or down to tell you if book is good, too hard, too easy, etc.; can acknowledge to them that it might be strange having a stranger in the library ask all these questions, and explain why you need to do this (to find the best books for them)
* **If she doesn’t like the books you offer**
  + Could look at nonfiction, pulling out items to show; could look in readers or picture books; if nothing works, may need to start again
* If not getting answers, offering broad range and keeping an eye on responses might lead you down different path (ie not just My Little Pony)
* Decide how much time to spend with them when not getting response back (other patrons might need help); can spend lots of time if they’re the only ones there, but if busy then hand them things and come back later to check in
* If not getting response can take them to age-appropriate section and leave them to explore (they sometimes need a private moment to look)
* Can look at other elements of the story (ex. My little pony has animals, friendship, magic, etc); they may be tired of the series they’ve read but want something similar

**Final thoughts from Sarah**

In initial reference interview, can ask them if it’s their first time at library; they may be overwhelmed and need a little tour of the area; show them, then check in again later

Good to ask lots of questions to find out what they like about the books, may notice they have a soccer uniform, other interests, etc.