



The eBook Advantage: Why Educators and Students Love Lightbox™

Mernie Maestas wears a number of hats: librarian at Boone Trail Elementary, lead librarian for the Wentzville School District, former president of the Missouri Association of School Librarians, and a PhD candidate in library and information management. It would be fair to say that a love of books and a passion for literacy are driving forces in her life, and she brings that enthusiasm to the students she interacts with on a daily basis.

As a librarian, Maestas is constantly connecting students with books, and that includes eBooks, the majority of which come from Follett. “Our district was on the leading edge when Follett Shelf™ District Manager™ was initiated,” Maestas says. Today, with school closures and remote learning becoming the norm, she is seeing even more uses for eBooks, and is more excited than ever to be able to engage students while she is not interacting in person.

Wentzville School District continues to find new and exciting ways to harness the power of eBooks for dynamic learning opportunities. “For example, I’ve purposely purchased a number of wordless books in eBook format,” Maestas said. “The books can be projected onto the SMART Board®, and the whole class has the opportunity to ‘read’ the illustrations. A traditional print book could never accomplish that with a whole class.” Using Zoom, teachers can continue to work remotely with an entire class using this approach.



MERNIE MAESTAS
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Maestas says the biggest boost in learning with eBooks has come with Lightbox™, which offers fully interactive eBook content that supports the varied approaches educators use to help students master concepts. “We have tremendous teaching and learning outcomes with the integration of the Lightbox books into classroom studies,” said Maestas. Because the books are available with simultaneous access, everyone in the classroom can explore the same book at the same time. “These resources are excellent in pairing with curriculum and are so affordable when you consider what it would cost to provide traditional class sets,” Maestas said.

When it comes to student learning, Maestas says kids can’t get enough of the Lightbox eBooks. “They love interacting with the books and seeing the books come to life with the imagery,” she said. “In the past, I have seen kids at the bookshelves finding the traditional books and talking with their friends to see if they’ve ever used the Lightbox version of the book. The kids recommend them to each other!” Maestas believes eBooks promote better reading habits and strategies and is glad all students can continue to improve literacy

using a medium they love while learning at home. “I have certain kids who function with iPads throughout the day. For them, eBooks are a natural pairing. The book is always with them, even now at home. It is accessible any time, plus, it is never lost or damaged. When school was in session, these kids felt a part of the natural school environment because eBooks were a natural part of the school environment, and now it’s not much different. I love that. They love that. Their parents love that.”

During a recent social studies curriculum team meeting, Maestas shared information about the Lightbox books available about various US regions. “I was relaying the number of features Lightbox books include – videos, vocabulary, text read-aloud features, quizzes – and explaining how a whole class can work in the books at the same time,” Maestas said. “I had a teacher tell me, ‘I need these...like right now!’ Since that time, I buy as many as I possibly can that

connect in curricular areas and make sure my teachers know about them.”

Her school incorporates eBooks in a variety of areas, including as classroom curriculum support, with special education students, and previously, as stations in libraries and as listening centers in the classroom. Maestas is thrilled her school worked together to get students comfortable with – and excited about – eBooks early in the year, which has had unexpected benefits now that students had to shift to learning from home; access to electronic learning resources is essential when they can’t visit their library for physical books.

“I think students are much more comfortable with using eBooks now that they’ve been using them on a regular basis,” said Maestas. “I strongly recommend the Lightbox eBooks. The kids love them; what more do you need? When you can get children to love engaging with content, you have accomplished the ultimate!”

