

# I Love My Librarian!

Award

Jane E. Martellino  
K-5 Media Specialist  
The International School at Dundee  
Greenwich, Connecticut

**Nominated by:** Teresa Ricci, Ferris Buddy, Jennifer Freeda, Diane Garofalo, Angie Hartofilis, Deirdre Albanese, Marietta Contadino, and Patricia Minicozzi

ISD Students, Family and Staff ALL LOVE Jane Martellino, our librarian!

Jane Martellino came to the International School at Dundee (ISD) four years ago, and she brought with her: knowledge, principles, skills, a passion for books, love of children, and a vision to make the library Learning Center a community beyond reading. Jane is an exceptional librarian, educator and a valued member of our school and community. All staff, students and families in our school and community benefit from her knowledge through her love of all things books and reading (which is absolutely infectious), her innovative use of technology and her warm, positive messages and dedication. Jane is deeply revered and valued by our ISD Community and below are some of the reasons we think she should be the recipient of this year's "I Love My Librarian Award". These are a few contributions by selected parents and staff members, and this is by no means an exhaustive list, of the fun, innovative, community building, social emotional, and educational programs Jane provides to our ISD Community.

"Mr. Wiggles is a stuffed green Bookworm, with glasses and a big nose. What he loves to do more than anything is to read, because that is the way he stays alive. Well, every kindergartener is so proud, and happy when they get to bring Mr. Wiggles home for the week. At the end of the week, the children present their books about their week with Wiggles. The end of the year is pretty special too, because every kindergartener gets to have his/her very own Wiggles. Jane, along with volunteer parent and staff support, makes a Wiggles for about 60 plus children every year. She gives every bookworm its own personal name. "He" writes a letter to the intended kindergartener, saying that his family member heard all about fun that child had with Mr. Wiggles, and can they come home with them and continue reading. The letter also comes with a reading log, so that you can write down all the books you and your Wiggles read that summer." - Deirdre Albanese

To date there are approximately 180 Mr. Wiggles residing in ISD family's homes and around 500 worldwide, keeping students company while they devour books alongside their very own bookworm. This journey, which lasts the course of the entire school year, develops a love of reading in our young

ISD students and really helps connect parents reading with their children. Elements of fun, adventure and pride are exhibited by each student as they share with their family and then with their classmates their own family's personal adventures during their hosting week.

Jane founded "The Charter Oak Book Award" in 2010, after discovering that Connecticut did not offer a K-3 book award program. 2020 is the 10 year anniversary of the Charter Oak Book Award which has anywhere from 60-70 schools participating annually. Thousands of students over the past 10 years have benefited from this vital and inspiring program. The purpose of this award is to encourage K-3 students to develop an appreciation of outstanding writing and illustrations in current picture books. The students develop critical and evaluative thinking skills by judging the literary quality of nominated titles. The winners are selected by the students in grades K-3 and prepares them for participation in the Nutmeg Book Award Program. Jane spends endless hours of her summer reading the newest children's book looking for those special nominees to participate in the program.

"As a parent, I was fortunate to go to Jane's talk on the whole book approach. In that talk Jane taught parents what she teaches their kids. She shared many aspects of how to preview and choose a book to read. This is how she gets the kids to think critically when choosing the Charter Oak Children's Book winner. During the pandemic I watched my boys look, listen, and decide which book they felt was the winner. They looked critically at the art, the information, and story, and how it made them feel before they chose their finalist." -Deirdre Albanese

During my time as Author Liaison, Jane would often talk about how she wanted to start a Battle of the Books, a sort of Jeopardy tournament for kids books. Before the pandemic, Battle of the Books kicked off, with five schools participating. This year, all 11 elementary schools wish to participate! Students read 10 titles between June and March 1st. In March, all participating students take a Battle of the Books Quiz. The top scorers in each classroom will advance to a school Battle of the Books (5th grade only). The winning team represents their school and competes in a district wide Battle of the Books. - Deirdre Albanese

She dug deep during the pandemic time when all students and staff needed her most. She worked tirelessly, reaching as many staff, students and parents that she possibly could to help during these extremely challenging times. Her technical skills, patience in trouble shooting, ability to teach children and adults how to work technology, and nourish the social emotional needs of all people, knack for bringing humor and a smile even in the darkest of times shown through.

"Mrs. Martellino became a LIFESAVER during COVID-19. She created a "Library Padlet Wall" so all the students could access books, the read aloud, activities, Maggie's Message, and Mrs. M. if you needed any help. Because Mrs. M. taught them the techniques of exploring all the possibilities of their iPad, air dropping documents, copying links, Book Creator, and the fun of creating movies hands on with a Green Screen, her students had the knowledge to complete their homeschool work virtually."

She found a way to convey to students and their families a positive, uplifting message focused on mindfulness, gratitude, attention to the natural world and simple joy through her virtual classroom dog, which was a talking dog. Remote learning was challenging at times for most families and a positive message, in a familiar voice, was helpful in staying the course and connecting with others.

“Maggie/Mrs. Martellino” delivered a thoughtful message directly to everyone at school in the guise of silliness, which was very appealing to my children, but the deeper message was important and heartfelt. I believe this helped my children and I’m sure our community during this time.

Maggie debuted on March 30th of this year and left a message for ISD students every day during the lockdown until June 11th. She left four messages over the summer and now leaves a weekly message to ISD students, as well as all those that now follow Maggie on her blog. Over 6,200 people have visited and watched Maggie. The social emotional connection that Maggie is capable of making with students and adults is remarkable. Jane was brilliant in taking her cute dog Maggie and sending messages containing helpful tips, empathy as we were all in this struggle together, encouragement because something could be done about it, humor as smiling and laughing always lifts up ones spirits, and connection during a time we were all physically apart.

Mrs. Martellino is so in tune with her students and is always volunteering for any event her students participated in. The yearly field day, the talent show, the Color Challenge, animal night, math night, mad science night... my son would email Mrs. M. how much he loved hearing Maggie’s positive messages! My son was a First Grader when he came home so excited, “Guess What Mom? Mrs. Martellino, our new librarian is AWESOME! We are going to have a Pumpkin Book Contest, build with KEVO Blocks, and create our own books on our iPad!” 2020 marks the 4th annual Great Pumpkin Book Character Showcase that Jane brought to ISD. This is a voluntary home-to school activity that engages families in creativity and literature. Families are asked to pick one of their favorite books, re-read details from the text that describe the physical aspects of the character, examine illustrations of the character, and decorate a pumpkin to resemble the character. Pumpkins along with the books their character are put on display in the ISD Learning Commons for everyone to enjoy. Each participant receives a certificate of participation and each year between 60-70 families participate in this fun filled event.- Patricia Minicozzi (Boguslaski)

Come June, “school was over, but not for our very own Mary Poppins (Jane Martellino) and her students during the summer of COVID-19. Mrs. Martellino created a magic Padlet Wall, “Take a Chance Head on The Road of Summer Learning”. She shared a free virtual summer camp, Varsity Tutors, that offered such diverse programs as Brain Games, Chess, Magic Tricks, Lego Movie, Super Cool Structures, and more to keep our children engaged and thinking all summer long. Mrs. M. knows how much Luigi loves to draw and read graphic novels, so she sent him a link with for summer camp with authors and illustrators Mo Willems, Jarret Krosoczka, and Jeffrey Brown. Luigi wanted to read books in Italian, he emails Mrs. M. BAM! A quick email later, she sent Luigi the link to translate any book into Italian. The list goes on and on .... all the amazing, caring, and mindful things Mrs. Martellino did and keeps doing!” - Marietta Contadino

Jane also spearheaded our school's first one book, one school read in *The Very Very Far North* to be read throughout the summer of 2020. The book will be reviewed in the coming weeks when the author, Dan Bar-el, makes a virtual visit to our school!

"As a volunteer, I have had great fun working with Jane in two capacities. One as Book Fair chair, and the other as Author Liaison. My first year as Book Fair Chair I went to meet Jane, and discuss my ideas for the book fair family event. I had a ton of ideas. It was also the year we were not having an author come to the event. There had to be something that brought families out. We had a book raffle, places to sit and read, a spin the wheel giveaway, and a book art booth. I had an idea for promotion called bookFACED, where the book becomes your face. Jane and I talked about it, and she had an idea to make it even cooler. We put families in front of a green screen, and actually put them into the book art. It was such a hit we did that for the following year! She had taught a bunch of students who were interested how to green screen, and she even enlisted their help the second year, because it was so popular.

As Author Liaison I had the great privilege to see a few interesting authors that Jane got to come to the school. Three that I helped with directly were Troy Cummings, Shanda McColskey, and Jesse Janowitz. I got to hear two of those authors present. They were Troy Cummings and Shanda McColskey. Two things struck me as I watched these presentations, the first was the laughter, and happiness that each author brought to the kids. The second, was the children's questions and observations of the authors and their work. Before each grade came in, Jane prepped the author on the grade, saying you will love this group they are very chatty, or they will ask insightful questions, and she was more than right. It may have been the most fun I had volunteering at the school. And, in honor of Troy Cumming's book, *Can I Be Your Dog*, we actually did a shelter drive to give back to the local dog shelter. The kids brought in tons of stuff, and the first grade was so happy to meet one of the dogs they helped." - Deirdre Albanese

Mrs. Martellino fosters personal relationships with students to guide, personalize and enhance reading choices and opportunities for them she also exhibits willingness to be available to students and families for all aspects of reading, learning and social-emotional development. My son would always ask Mrs. M. what books should I read about super heroes, adventures, mysteries...? Mrs. M. created a personal reading list, "Summer Reading Suggestions for L." with actual photos of the book covers with a link. She gave him the independence, the freedom to choose to be open-minded, reflective, a thinker, and inquirer. - Marietta Contadino

Jane is a strong supporter of the PTA. She sends out 'Thank You' videos to share in our weekly newsletter informing all parents of the benefits of a program she just delivered, such as an author's visit, and highlighting that it was made possible by the PTA. Jane also works closely with the PTA enrichment team to find ways to get physical books into the hands of our ISD students. Sometimes this involves discussions with visiting authors to make a deal about purchasing books along with their compensation or sometimes she finds incredible books on discounted websites for us to secure books. Jane supplies a weekly contribution to our newsletter highlighting: new books, social/emotional learning highlights, Connecting with Experts, the current event at school for family involvement such as the Pumpkin Book Character Showcase, and reminders about upcoming events such as Author and Illustrator chats. These

contributions go a long way in helping parents to connect with their children and spark discussions about what they are learning in school. Jane delivers approximately 25 virtual visits to ISD students each year! She is a rock star and our PTA is grateful to have her as such an incredible collaborator.

Angie Hartofilis ISD PTA Co-President

The staff as well, stand behind this nomination. Mrs. Freeda, a kindergarten teacher, shared her sentiments about Mrs. Martellino. "The school community at the International School at Dundee is very fortunate to have Mrs. Martellino as the Media Specialist. Mrs. Martellino interacts with every student in a way that encourages wondering and inquiry throughout their years in our K-5 school. Watching how Mrs. Martellino works at each grade level is inspiring to her fellow educators. This connection naturally broadens a child's love of reading. As a Media Specialist, Mrs. Martellino has many ways to incorporate technology into teaching and learning. She uses tools in a manner that allows students to better understand the lessons being taught and supports teachers striving for the same goal. Layering tech tools, coupled with wonderful content gives the students an in-depth lesson. The exposure to these tools help the students and the teachers become more comfortable with integrating technology into their work.

The staff relies heavily on Mrs. Martellino broad knowledge base. She is also eager to learn new techniques and readily shares these ideas with the staff too. The wealth of information is never overwhelming as Mrs. Martellino is cognizant of our needs but always takes the time to share what is important for each teacher at their personal level. This makes it easier to try new tools and explore the options we have.

Mrs. Martellino's commitment to the social and emotional well-being of our community is deep. During the lockdown in the Spring, Mrs. Martellino was always using her connections with the school community, to get a better understanding of what we were in need of to keep the students, staff and even the families emotionally healthy. Sometimes that meant offering technology solutions to teaching in the remote setting. There were daily changes from the district and we were inundated with ideas and suggestions, Mrs. Martellino was always ready to vet these tools and techniques. She is also in a position to speak for us and articulate what would work best for our students at the school and district level.

For the families and students, Mrs. Martellino began sending a daily message from Maggie (her dog who stepped in as the Media Center Dog during the lockdown.) Maggie's daily messages tackled issues that our own students might be feeling and used the International Baccalaureate Traits and Attitudes to give Maggie a way to work out issues such as being shy around new friends or apprehensive because someone appeared different from her.

Another family favorite was a chapter book read aloud where students could check in daily to hear a chapter and use tools like Padlet to share their thoughts with the school community at large. These quick check-ins were a great way for students to connect with their peers during a time when we were all home. This connection to each other was something we sorely missed. In the Spring, many

publishers opened up limited copyright restrictions due to COVID and distance learning. Mrs. Martellino used this opportunity to encourage us to create read aloud stories for our students. These activities were so popular that some teachers incorporated their own read aloud stories for families. Personally, this practice brought a sense of normalcy to my teaching. At the end of the year, parents shared that this daily “break” was desperately needed and a sense of calm in their hectic days. One parent wrote that she started her day with “a cup of coffee and listening to the read aloud” This was the calm beginning of her day as she helped 3 elementary aged students navigate distance/emergency teaching. This action was a reminder for everyone to take a few minutes to just enjoy. Carpe diem! In my case, this brought a sense of normalcy to myself and my students. I know our school community has benefited in so many ways. Mrs. Martellino quickly took to the culture of our school community and showed us how important her contribution is during a typical school year. During these COVID times with so much uncertainty she is a gift to us all. I am forever grateful for the encouragement that I received from Mrs. Martellino.

Mrs. Buddy, the art teacher wrote, Jane Martellino, our Librarian, has been an incredible asset to our school. From the moment she arrived, she implemented programs for students and staff that have been engaging, inspiring and helpful. She has provided enriching programs connecting the students with authors, as well as involving myself as an Art the teacher, and classroom teachers in the programs. During the onset of remote teaching during Covid she was integral in helping the teachers and staff navigate the many new components of teaching with technology from home. Above all she is wonderful to work with, always offers a kind smile and a laugh even during the most stressful of times. I can personally say I am extremely thankful to have the opportunity to work with such an incredible, kind, fun and knowledgeable colleague.

In closing, gr. 4 teacher, Diane Garofalo wrote: Please do not show Jane Martellino, our Media Specialist Extraordinaire at ISD, her job description. Apparently, she is blissfully unaware that providing perfect book choices, devising clever curriculum activities for every grade level, and filming tutorials for staff and students on the latest technology, are tasks not meant to include her weekends, vacations, summers, and sick days. For Jane, such exceptional service and remarkable dedication is the norm. Her brilliant mind literally never stops and everyone at ISD benefits from her enthusiasm, intelligence, and incomparable creative energy. Jane’s impressive and up to the minute knowledge of new releases and all things technology is breathtaking. Her gift is sharing this information while managing to make keeping up with her look easy, even though we recognize it is impossible. Jane loves nothing more than the challenge of a reluctant reader. Give her thirty minutes with a child and Jane will recommend the perfect book, transforming the child into a lifelong lover of reading. I have witnessed this many times. Her patience and this magical ability make Jane a teacher’s and parent’s dream - our secret weapon. Her passion for books is so palpable, so contagious, that you simply have to be a part of it. Jane is outstanding. With her lightning fast mind, generous spirit, and boundless energy, she has enriched and reshaped our ISD community in countless positive ways.

Jane Martellino, the gift that keeps on giving.