

Faculty Innovation Grant 2022-23  
Audio Adventures in the Lower School Library

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## **Overview:**

The Audio Adventures Innovation grant provided funding to try a variety of new audiobook, talking book, and screen-free audio tools, housed in the Library, for the entire Lower School community. The goal was to try an array of different tools to find out what students enjoyed most and what tools would be the best fit for students and teachers moving forward. This year, the various audio tools were used in the library by all grade levels during their weekly classes. The audio and talking books were borrowed by students during Library class to take back to their classrooms or to read at home. It was my initial plan to allow the Yoto players and cards to be borrowed, but I ran into unanticipated technical roadblocks, and they were incompatible with the school network. Despite these challenges the Yoto players have been an extremely popular tool for students and the favorite of the different audio devices.

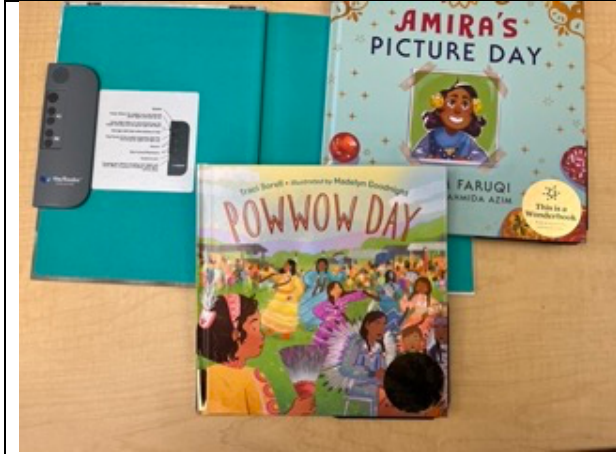
## **Materials:**

**With this grant, I was able to purchase:**

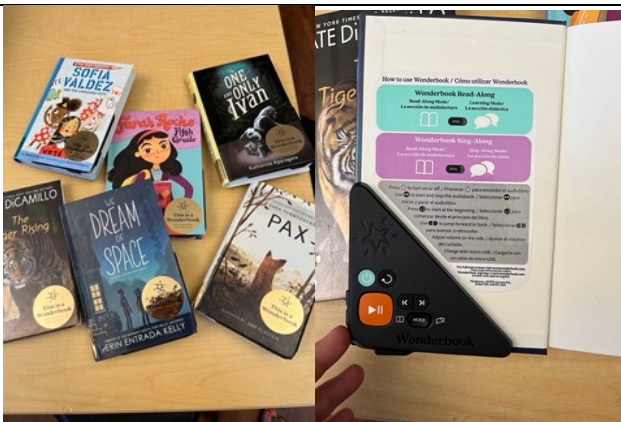


**15 Yoto Audio Players**

**100 audio content cards**



50 “talking” picture books with a rechargeable audio player built into the printed book



10 “talking” chapter books with a rechargeable audio player built into the printed book



7 Playaway portable audio players loaded with popular book titles

**Impact:**

This grant had a large impact on the Lower School Library program, as it was able to provide tools that were used by the whole student population at all grade levels. All students had the opportunity to use any tool that was appropriate for their age or ability, and the Yoto players were able to be used across all grade levels. While there is still much potential for growth and yet untapped ways to use the tools, the impact of having these audio resources was clear. Students were excited to experience literature in new ways and the talking books were approachable to reluctant and beginning readers.

**Implementation:**

Students were introduced to the different audio tools during Library class. Once they had learned about each item, they became a frequent choice during Library class. As we used the various tools and made them part of Library routines, the resources became a seamless part of our space. I shared news with the community in my monthly library newsletters and with parents who visited the library space. Once the

books and audio players were loaded into the Library Catalog, they became available for students to check out. Students are allowed to check out one audiobook at a time and must return their book before borrowing a new one to ensure that the books are being cared for and everyone has a chance to take them out from the Library.

Book orders arrived throughout the Fall and I had to deal with delays and backorders of books and other necessary materials like the chargers. The special library records used to upload details about a book to a library catalog were initially incompatible, so there were further delays while the suppliers reformatted and resent the information. Books had arrived and were ready for student use in the Library by November. It took longer to resolve the records issue and students started borrowing the books to take home in February and March.

Once I had the books and introduced them in Library classes, they were extremely popular. I dedicated time during class to show students how they worked and modeled different ways the talking books could be used. Once students were oriented to the books, they were a regular part of our Library classes and students used them individually or to read with friends. Teachers also borrowed books to use in the classroom if the read aloud feature would be helpful to a student. Talking picture books have been very popular with students in grades PK-1 with these groups checking them out the most. When I had older students try the talking chapter books and Playaway audio players, students preferred the Playaways. They reported that they didn't like the controls and the bulky cover of the talking books is uncomfortable to hold while reading. Most students reported that they mostly read the book and didn't end up using the audio player feature. The Playaways were preferred, as they are small and portable. Students also enjoyed having the option to just listen or read along with the physical book if they chose to do so.



The Yoto players were by far the most popular part of this grant and the most impactful in the Library. The players are rechargeable screen-free audio players that use interchangeable audio cards as content. Players have a speaker, so they can be used by a group of students or with headphones by an individual student.



Yotos are universally appealing to students and are used by all grade levels. I introduced the players to students in Library class and they quickly became a seamless part of our classes. With simple controls and a wide variety of cards, there truly is something for everyone and students can access them independently and confidently. Students enjoy using the Yotos as a choice during class or to have a quiet moment. Meditation and mindfulness cards were unexpectedly very popular, and students ask regularly to use them while drawing or to have a “mindful moment”. Students regularly asked to use the Yotos in the Library and occasionally brought the players back to the classroom to use with their teacher’s permission.





The unexpected snag was that the Yotos could not connect to our secure school network. I worked with both Yoto and our tech department to troubleshoot and they could not connect despite hours of work on the issue. I was able to load all the content cards that I had purchased for offline use by students, but we were unable to download new content or use the podcast features built into the players. This is an area of growth for next year.

**Future:**

There is still much work I plan to do with the resources obtained with the Innovation Grant. I will work with teachers to integrate these tools into their classrooms and order more titles that correlate with classroom curriculum. While the books available in the talking format is limited, the selection continues to grow. I will not spend library funds to purchase additional talking chapter books, but I will purchase more talking picture books and Playaway audio players. I have a close working relationship with Kim Tolpa, the LS Director of Student Services. We plan to continue to collaborate and match the talking books to kids that can use them to build confidence as readers. Talking books are approximately two to three times as expensive as a traditional printed book, but I anticipate being able to add around ten new books next year with my existing budget.

Yoto is still a very new company and I was one of the first teachers to try using a group of players in a school setting. The software and setup is intended for personal, home use with one player for one child. I continue to be in touch with Yoto tech support and have a set of new steps for connecting to a school network to try this summer. When the Yoto players are on the school network we will be able to connect to podcasts and updated content. Students will be able to create and record their own content using Make Your Own cards. I look forward to empowering students to record their own writing, stories, and podcast content to share with peers and our school community. Yoto content cards are very inexpensive, costing less or the same as a printed book, I anticipate being able to easily add new content cards and absorb this into the library budget.

**Expenses:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Yoto Players (15)	944.86
Yoto Cards	\$ 742.92
Storage Locker, Headphones and charging cables	\$ 537.63
Vox Books	\$ 1,069.21
Wonderbooks and Playaways	\$ 2,199.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 5,494.30</b>

\*I had originally budgeted for Yoto player cases, but they are no longer available