2021 Annual Conference Preview
“The Library is the Heart of Love, Literacy, and Learning”

As we have entered a new calendar year, we can certainly say without a doubt that our libraries are the heart of the school. And as we teach our students in new ways and over new means, we know our school librarians are essential to the love, literacy, and learning that is occurring in our schools.

The authors and speakers slated for the 2021 Annual Conference will share with attendees all aspects of the ways to teach and reach your students with love, promote literacy and, of course, enhance learning for all.

Judy Deichman – VAASL 2021 Conference Chair

Wednesday Pre-Conference

You definitely need to plan on arriving on Wednesday for an afternoon of learning at the conference center with three exciting programs.

First, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts will bring their state-of-the-art traveling museum and art studio. Part traveling museum and part art studio, the VMFA Artmobile combines real artwork with interactive components. It will be open beginning at 2PM for our pre-conference attendees.

Our second event will be a two-hour hands-on session with Fara Faust, the 2018 Computer Science Teacher of the Year and a trained CS First facilitator by CodeVA. She will introduce CS First and show participants how it works and what resources are available. She will also introduce the Scratch interface and a simple introduction to block coding. There will be time to create a CS First project while Fara is there to help and provide support. If you have wanted to integrate coding into your library program but did not know where to start, this is a great opportunity to learn how.

Our final event will be a poster presentation of *Fixer to Fabulous Library Edition*. We will be calling on members to share their pictures and their stories on how they transformed their old library spaces into beautiful new
spaces to attract students and staff to the library. The posters will be displayed the entire time of the conference but get an exclusive sneak peek at the Wednesday pre-conference and attend a special reception!

**Attention - First Timers!!!!!!**
Just for you, Wednesday evening! A first timer's event to get you ready for the conference. The event begins at 7 PM and will highlight tips and tricks for a successful conference experience.

**President's Breakfast Reception at the Exhibit Hall Grand Opening – Thursday @ 8:00 AM**

Jenni Cooper, VAASL's President, is starting Thursday off with a bang and will be offering Mimosas to everyone who attends the President's Breakfast Reception!

Sign up to join us in the Exhibit Hall for this complimentary reception to officially kick-off the 2021 conference.

**A Delicious Trio: Literacy, Reading, and The Gingerbread Man at the Thursday Awards Luncheon**

For our Thursday Awards Luncheon, we are pleased to be hosting author Laura Murray and illustrator Mike Lowery as our keynote speakers. This dynamic duo, who worked together to create *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School* series, will share how their work can have an impact on literacy and the love of reading.

Unsurprisingly, Murray’s elementary school librarian played a key role in her becoming a reader when she introduced her to the *Dark Is Rising* series, by Susan Cooper. Then, while attending college to earn her teaching degree, she got the writing bug after taking a children’s literature course. The former kindergarten teacher now lives with her husband, three children, and dog Roxy in Northern Virginia.
During a 2016 interview with Scholastic’s Mr. Schu, Murray said, “School libraries are like a passport. Every time you check out a book, you receive a stamp that beckons you to explore, to travel beyond yourself and your comfort zone . . . and when you close that book and come back home, you are a changed and better person for having taken each journey.” To learn more about Murray, visit her at www.lauramurraybooks.com.

Because Murray says she is “good at drawing stick people and that's about it,” she relies on Mike Lowery to help bring her characters to life. He became interested in art while spending summers with his grandmother in Tennessee, an amateur artist who encouraged him to create a sketchbook. He has gone on to both write and illustrate numerous books, including How to be a T. Rex, Prince and Pirate, and the Doodle Adventures and Junior Genius Guides series.

A former professor of illustration at the Savannah School of Art and Design in Georgia, Murray now works and lives in New York with his wife and daughter. He also has done illustrations for a host of other publications and organizations, including the New York Times, MacWorld magazine, and the Atlanta Braves baseball team. You can learn more about him at his website: www.mikelowery.com.

There are now five books in the Gingerbread Man series. The first one, The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School, won a 2014 Virginia Reader’s Choice award and earned a starred review in ALA’s Booklist.

Get Real-ity With Our Thursday Keynote Speaker

Wondering what to do with that MergeCube? Feeling lost in the Metaverse?

Help is on the way in the form of Jaime Donnally, our Thursday Keynote Speaker! Jamie specializes in practical ideas for using augmented, mixed, and virtual reality in the classroom. She is skilled in choosing and customizing immersive technology tools for all learners.

Jamie began her career in education as a math teacher. Her enthusiasm for technology led to a career as an edtech consultant and the opportunity to collaborate with educators and students from around the world.

Jamie is the author of The Immersive Classroom: Create Customized Learning Experiences with AR/VR (2021) and Learning Transported:

You can learn more about Jamie by checking out her blog at ARVRinEDU.com for the #31DaysofARVRinEDU series, or by joining her weekly #ARVRinEDU Twitter chat on Wednesday nights.

**Literary Magic at the Friday Awards Luncheon**

Join us for a magical literary discussion as we welcome Dhonielle Clayton to the 2021 VAASL Conference Friday Awards luncheon, Nov. 5.

Dhonielle is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The Belles* series, which was inspired by her interest as a teenager in magazines and beauty, and how they affected her self-image. Along with Sona Charaipotra, she co-authored the *Tiny Pretty Things* duology upon which the Netflix original series is based. Additionally, she wrote *The Rumor Game* and collaborated with Nic Stone, Tiffany D. Jackson, Angie Thomas, Ashley Woodfolk, and Nicola Yoon on the 2021 interlinked novel, *Blackout*.

Born in Washington, D.C., and now living in New York City, Dhonielle spent most of her childhood under her grandmother’s table with a stack of books. A former elementary and middle school librarian, she also taught secondary school for several years. Currently the COO of the non-profit *We Need Diverse Books*, Dhonielle is the co-founder and owner of CAKE Literary, a creative kitchen whipping up decadent—and decidedly diverse—literary confections for middle grade, young adult, and women’s fiction readers.

Dhonielle is an avid traveler who is always on the hunt for magic and mischief. She spent most of her twenties in and out of America – living in London, Paris, a small Japanese town, Bermuda, and generally wandering the planet. She has been on five of the seven continents and has grand plans to reach all of them.
2019 National Teacher of the Year Is Friday’s Keynote Speaker

Rodney Robinson, the 2019 National Teacher of the Year, will share insights on the impact of “Library, Love, Literacy, and Learning” as our Friday Keynote Speaker, Nov. 5.

Robinson’s experiences include working with striving learners of the Virgie Binford Education Center, studying the impact of school-to-prison pipelines, and helping to develop new pathways for learner success beyond academics. He has several works published by Yale University that showcase his passion, dedication, and core belief that all students can succeed.

Join us as Rodney shares his experiences on the power of “Library, Love, Literacy, and Learning” for all students.