

Mona-Lynne Ayotte

Teacher-Librarian

Institut collégial Vincent Massey Collegiate

Pembina Trails Schools Division



Mona-Lynne Ayotte is a bilingual teacher-librarian with 33 years of library experience, 21 of those at Institut collégial Vincent Massey Collegiate. She loves to read in all types of formats and has recently promoted our new Flipster magazine database along with a teen mental health e-book series entitled Cameron's Collection. She has continued over the years her education in Indigenous Treaty Work, sharing this knowledge in classes and most recently sewed and coordinated the making of ribbon skirts and shirts for our school. This year, she created an instructional ribbon skirt-making document, which she willingly shared with our staff and others. She offers a wide variety of makerspace experiences like aromatherapy and sewing and continues to teach meditation and drumming for health classes to our students who are looking for ways to improve their well-being. She is a vivacious and loud teacher-librarian who supervises and joins in Yoga and Zumba with our Massey students. She continues to write professional articles for the Manitoba School Library Journal, having once been its former editor and was recently published in *Effective School Librarianship: Successful Professional Practices from Librarians around the World*. She has one daughter and two cats and loves being outside walking, bicycling or working in her flower garden.

Upon my arrival to Institut collégial Vincent Massey Collegiate in September 2017, I quickly noticed the varied and impactful work of our teacher librarian, Mona-Lynne Ayotte. It was quite

new and refreshing for me to observe the library being used beyond simply being a quiet place to study and check out books as I had previously experienced in other schools. In fact, it was quite apparent that the library did a lot more than provide students with a space to study and read. The everyday ordinary little things that Mona-Lynne spearheads and implements are extraordinary. Mona-Lynne can be found leading workshops, connecting students with a variety of resources in and out of the library, setting up different learning spaces that make our building work in a more productive and inclusive way. For instance, her makerspace area is a unique way to provide students with a safe space to develop skills during lunch, such as sewing or to calm down with an aromatherapy workshop. I noticed that there were also drumming, yoga and meditation workshops being offered or supervised by Mona-Lynne. Since we have a fairly significant percentage of Indigenous students, Ms. Ayotte has made it a priority to work as a Treaty educator within our building. She has made several ribbon skirts and ribbon shirts, participated actively in sage ceremonies and other activities in the context of our Indigenous student circle group, social studies and English classes to promote Indigenous awareness. She even handmade fireproof curtains for our Indigenous student program so that they could have a safe and private space for smudging ceremonies in the library.

Every day Mona-Lynne connects with teachers and students to ensure quality programming and learning content is available to all. This year she applied for a grant with Artists in the School to have Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon work with four high school classes and a lunch time writing club. A new teacher to creative writing was able to increase his knowledge and skill set as a result. She supervises students during lunch for yoga and Zumba as well as spending the other noon hours helping students with academic work or makerspace activities. During this challenging CO-VID 19 time, she helped to instigate a password reset procedure that benefited the entire school division and has been very helpful in connecting students with their online learning programming, which has reassured both staff and parents.

This fall, despite an extreme library renovation situation last year, Ms. Ayotte along with her team of library technicians, opened a new library learning commons space that welcomed and served students and staff. The library learning commons goes way beyond essential library services. She worked to design an innovative library learning commons, which would meet the needs of high school students and teachers as most documents on learning commons focused more on elementary and middle years concepts. The different learning spaces, which include working rooms, meeting spaces both active and quiet, can accommodate different class sizes, group work and private and or quiet individual workspaces. Ms. Ayotte worked diligently to create a high school working environment anticipating many workable solutions that brought everyone together in this new space. She works side by side with teachers to assist with their curricular needs and often does presentations with classes to develop research strategies; those might include creating a podcast, working with Flipster and comic creation to name a

few. She often helps students doing online courses to make sure that they are connected to someone in our building. She keeps the latest and classic graphic novels, fiction (both French and English) available for students to read and sign-out. Mona-Lynne is passionate about helping students succeed and meets with many student during classes and noon hours on a one-on-one basis to help plan projects and to review their French writing assignments. A few years ago she introduced Antidote stations for our French Immersion students so they could auto-correct their work.

Mona-Lynne prioritizes her professional involvement and development as a library educator. She is a Manitoba School Library Association's former editor. She has continued to contribute to writing and assisting with the journal and namely contributed a chapter published in June 2018 on her library teaching experiences in *Effective School Librarianship: Successful Professional Practices from Librarians around the World*. This book by Patrick Lo and author authors highlights the resilience, creativity, and best practices of successful school librarians from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and North and South America. Last year, she attended the Ontario Library Association Conference, where she discovered new resources, which she has since shared with our staff. Mona-Lynne is also active on Twitter @MonaLynneAyotte and Instagram @mmemlayotte posting many events and student activities that are taking place in and out of our school. In late fall 2019, she did two professional development presentations: one for the Interdivisional teacher-librarian symposium (*Working Collaboratively with the Student in Mind*) and the other, a successful presentation for SAGE entitled *Clutter Keeping Secrets*.

Ms. Ayotte presents at every staff meeting to update our staff and encourages us to use accessible resources for our students and ourselves as educators. In fact, there is an area on our school online platform that she created with many library links in all of the teaching languages we offer (English, French and Spanish). She runs practical workshops for teachers about NFB, Flipster, Cameron's Collection and Curio. She also introduced online magazines to our school and has launched a service to improve Teen Mental Health. To support my dream to create a high-school credited course based on developing students' emotional intelligence, Ms. Ayotte contacted Yale professor Laurie Santos about referencing her course entitled *Happiness Class* into my future work. In March 2019, Mona-Lynne who spoke to the whole student body in our gymnasium, challenged students to collect books for a book drive that she suggested we do to encourage students to participate in a community literacy project.

Mona-Lynne is very hands on. She works with teachers in their classrooms to assist students with developing their research and citation skills. She has provided many print and online guides for creating citations and demonstrates how to successful cite references accurately and

to prevent plagiarism. For instance, she regularly educates students about how to use databases and provides them with detailed information on how to use the MLA and APA citation styles, which are essential research skills for students entering postsecondary programs.

One of the key features of our library is the signing out of laptops, chargers, calculators, and headphones that students and staff can use anywhere and anytime inside and outside the building. To help solve a number of laptop issues, Ms. Ayotte and her library team recently wrote a laptop solutions guide to help all of the teachers and students find quick and easy solutions. This has been a lifesaver according to many teachers and students! And lastly, she and her team have been working to assist students in accessing EDSBY, our new online platform.

In brief, Mona-Lynne has been providing quality library leadership since 1999 at our school. The little, ordinary things she does on a daily basis for our students, staff and community make her an extraordinary librarian and most deserving to be recognized for her efforts and leadership as Teacher-Librarian of the year.