

**Interview conducted with Jennifer Parker, Ed.S.
School Library Media Specialist**

“In providing resources to middle school students, it’s critical to be able to point them to information that is safe and reliable and where the teacher has complete confidence that students will find what they need. With so much information out there, it’s important that we as library media specialists identify and promote the great resources we can provide access to. I take pride in knowing the best tools and sharing them. That’s why I turn to Britannica School as a key resource for my middle school.”

Located in northeast Georgia, the East Hall Middle School serves approximately 1,000 students in grades six through eight. The school has access to *Britannica School*® through GALILEO, a statewide-initiative that provides Georgia residents with access to authoritative, subscription-only information.

According to Jennifer Parker, School Library Media Specialist, *Britannica School* is most frequently used by students whose teachers have guided them there for their research projects. Parker said middle school students respond well to guided research because they like knowing a resource will produce the desired results. Once introduced to *Britannica School*, students often gravitate to the resource for their independent research.

Students and *Britannica School*

Parker said students really like using *Britannica School*. They find it easy to use and appreciate the readability levels. “The fact that students can choose their level with a click of a button is very attractive,” Parker commented. “The interface stays the same, regardless of which level they are in so there’s no stigma attached to reading at a lower level and students avoid any potential embarrassment of being seen as reading below grade level.”

Recently 7th-grade students worked on research projects on pollution in Asian countries and projects to present information about a specific animal kingdom. Both projects relied heavily on *Britannica School* as a resource. Especially when it comes to searching images, *Britannica School* provides an assurance that all images retrieved will be appropriate for students to be viewing—something that can’t be said for image searches on general search engines such as Google, “where you never know what you might retrieve,” said Parker. In addition, *Britannica School* content comes with simple and easy-to-use citations; Google does not.



Teachers and *Britannica School*

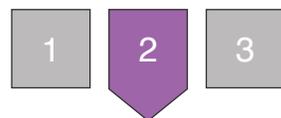
Britannica School offers Parker the opportunity to showcase the resources of the library as well as the library media specialist as the guide to those resources. She finds that teachers are happy to have her introduce *Britannica School* to students, providing an excellent opportunity to collaborate with teachers, with the media specialist as the information literacy expert alongside the teacher as content expert. *Britannica School*’s differentiated nonfiction reading levels make it easy for teachers to direct students to articles on different levels or to visual assets (e.g., videos and images) that support reading comprehension at their level. Ensuring students are reading at the appropriate level is critical to their understanding and combined access to supporting multimedia provides a rich research experience.

Parker also introduces teachers to the Lesson Plan Builder. Using this tool, teachers can find primary source material, articles, and images and create lesson plans around the content they select. Teachers can build customized Web pages with a mix of types of resources and combine content from any level to best meet the needs of their classes. They can give students a URL link to those pages to access the high-quality content that the teacher has pre-selected for student use. “Working with teachers on Lesson Plan Builder definitely helps build a relationship between the library media specialist and teachers,” she said. “Educating teachers on how this tool works and the power of it is an important part of what I do.”

Key Benefits of Using Britannica School

Jennifer Parker recognizes *Britannica School* as a critical resource for students and teachers. She points to the following benefits of *Britannica School* to illustrate why this is a resource she couldn't imagine doing without.

- **Ease of Use.** For both students and teachers, *Britannica School* makes it easy to get to the information they need on the appropriate reading level.
- **Breadth and Depth of Reliable and Safe Content.** *Britannica School* content is updated frequently to provide current information on the changing world, said Parker. Unlike Wikipedia, Britannica has 100+ editors who ensure that the content is highly accurate and up to date.
- **Readability of Articles.** *Britannica School* makes it easy to work with differentiated learners. In many cases, students are not aware of differentiated reading levels being accessed among their peers. This differentiation is unique in ensuring reading comprehension while allowing students to find information in the same platform.
- **High-Quality Graphic Images Support the Content.** *Britannica School* includes charts and graphs with the articles. These visual aids are extremely helpful in working with students who are visual learners.
- **Supports Common Core Skill Development.** Parker said *Britannica School* is the best resource for Lexile reading levels for nonfiction materials. Any Common Core content literacy activity can be done using *Britannica School*, she said.



Students can click on the reading level that is right for them while remaining in an age-appropriate interface.