The current age of accountability requires all educators to be responsible for collecting evidence that demonstrates improved student learning. It is, therefore, also imperative for school librarians to show how library instruction makes a difference. In the past, librarians focused almost exclusively on quantitative data to describe the value of the library program. Monthly and annual reports traditionally cited the number of books and other materials in the physical school library collection and circulation statistics for those items, the number of students and/or the number of classes that visited the library in each reporting period, and the number of literacy events held. While these numbers can indicate the relative strength of the library program, they do not necessarily provide accountability or indicate the quality of the librarian’s teaching.

Evidence for Practice: A Best Practice for Planning Instruction

In order to demonstrate value in terms of student learning, it is imperative that school librarians follow the tenants of evidence-based practice. Evidence-based practice involves three phases: evidence for practice, evidence in practice, and evidence of practice (Todd 2009). School librarians who consider these three components as they coplan for instruction can become teacher leaders with exemplary practices. These three practices can improve student learning while positively influencing the instructional practices of colleagues.

School librarians should initially identify which research evidence in the fields of education, technology, or library science serves as the foundation of instruction. They must be aware of the research on which instructional initiatives are based in their schools, districts, or state. The work of Robert Marzano and his colleagues provides a case in point. These researchers studied the impact of educators’ use of various instructional strategies on students’ standardized test results. They determined that nine strategies helped learners make the greatest gains:
- identifying similarities and differences,
- summarizing and note taking,
- reinforcing effort and providing recognition,
- homework and practice,
- nonlinguistic representations,
- cooperative learning,
- setting objectives and providing feedback,
- generating and testing hypotheses, and
- questions, cues, and advance organizers (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 2001; Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, and Stone 2012).

School librarians who integrate and intentionally teach these strategies are basing their instruction on evidence for practice. It is possible to develop repertoires in teaching these strategies in order to improve student learning and influence teachers’ teaching. For example, many educators rely heavily on tools such as K-W-L charts and Venn diagrams to support students in identifying similarities and differences. Scaffolding student learning with print and electronic category matrices and webs increases the types of graphic organizers offered learners. Teaching students to recognize and create metaphors and analogies further develops this ability. Ultimately, the goal is for students to have a wide variety of scaffolds in their learning toolkits so that they can best meet the requirements of the learning task.

Collecting Evidence in Practice: A Best Practice of Teaching

It is very difficult to tease out the school librarian’s unique contributions to student achievement from summative assessment data. Many of the skills taught, such as developing meaningful inquiry questions, evaluating websites, or using information ethically, are not tested on standardized tests. In addition, while the school librarian may be the only educator in the building explicitly teaching specific skills such as
note making (determining importance), other educators are requiring these processes in assignments, and students are complying, more or less, depending on their prior knowledge. Student achievement in these areas, therefore, does not necessarily reflect the school librarian’s teaching.

School librarians can use many different methods for collecting achievement data. Some librarians use tools that have been developed specifically for the library field, such as the T rails9 information literacy skills assessments (http://www.trails9.org). Such tools can be used as benchmarks for identifying various strengths and weaknesses in students’ information-seeking skills. Others use locally developed pre- and post-tests to measure students’ learning outcomes. Still others use student self-assessments as components on anticipation guides, admit slips, and exit tickets, and students gauge their own pre- and post-instruction skills, such as the ability to make inferences or to determine an author’s authority. Allison Zmuda’s article “Where Does Your Authority Come From?” offers additional ways to collect data (2006). Another method uses a form such as the one provided in “Use This Page,” page 59 of this issue of SLM. This form provides a way to keep records of each lesson/unit co-taught. This allows for a point of follow-up with coteachers on the success of the lesson or unit and provides data that can be compiled for personal use and for sharing with administrators and others.

DOCUMENTING AND SHARING EVIDENCE OF PRACTICE

Once it has been determined if students have met the targeted learning outcomes, school librarians and coteachers need to determine the next steps in instruction. Is there a need to reteach a small group of students or the entire class? Would it be best to give students more opportunities to practice the skills being measured before they transfer them to another content area or context? Using data to inform the next steps in teaching is a best practice for continuous improvement.

School librarians are wise to use or develop a form that helps them reflect with their teaching partners on the relative success of their coteaching efforts (Zmuda 2006). These forms can be completed at the end of cotaught lessons or units of instruction; they provide evidence of practice. These forms can include the educators’ observations and other data related to student achievement. Educators can note the effectiveness of specific research-based instructional strategies and make suggestions for improvement. They can comment on the benefits of coteaching and note ideas for strengthening their collaborative work. In addition, the forms can include the usefulness of library and Web-based resources for helping students meet the learning outcomes along with suggested titles to be added to the collection for the next time the lesson or unit is taught. Combined with student learning data, these forms provide a complete picture of the depth of learning and teaching in which the school librarian is engaged.

A BEST PRACTICE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND ADVOCACY

Once these data are collected and analyzed, it is essential that educators use this information to advocate for instructional partnerships. This information should be shared with school administrators as soon as possible after the instructional intervention. Ideally, coteachers should schedule a joint meeting in which the principal, classroom teacher(s) or specialist(s), and the school librarian discuss student learning outcomes, teaching and assessment strategies, and the next steps for instruction.

As Allison Zmuda and Violet Harada note, “Informal leaders are better suited to coaching the work at the classroom level based on identified learning principles and practices, whereas formal leaders are better suited to the enforcement of such principals and practices” (2008, 31). As teacher leaders, school librarians are perfectly positioned to take a leadership role in enacting exemplary collaborative instructional practices with colleagues to continuously improve teaching and student learning. With evidence-based practice, school librarians can lead the way.

REFERENCES:


Todd, Ross J. “School Librarianship and Evidence Based Practice: Progress, Perspectives, and Challenges.” Evidence Based Library & Information Practice 4, no. 2 (2009): 78-96.


See “Coteaching Lesson/Unit Plan Evaluation and Reflection” in this month’s “Use This Page” (page 59) for a sample form that provides a way to keep records of each lesson/unit co-taught.

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# Coteaching Lesson/Unit Plan Evaluation and Reflection

**by JUDI MOREILLON**

**THIS FORM PROVIDES** an extension of Moreillon’s article “Collecting and Documenting Evidence of Best Practice,” on pages 27-28 in this issue of *SLM*. It is a way for school librarians to document work done with classroom teachers that reflects student learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Today’s Date: ___________________________</th>
<th>Classroom Teacher: ___________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department: _____________________________</td>
<td>Unit Title/Topic: _____________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course: _________________________________</td>
<td>Grade Level: ________  Periods: _______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students Involved: ______________</td>
<td>Date(s) of Coteaching: ________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Outcome Objectives: Number/Percentage of Students:**

- Exceeded Expectations: ____________
- Met Expectations: ________________
- Did Not Meet Expectations: ______

**Student Engagement: Number/Percentage of Students:**

- High: ____________________________
- Average: _________________________
- Low: _____________________________

**Assessment Tool(s) for Students:**

- Effective: _________________________
- Needs Improvement: ____________

**Notes:**

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

**Final Product (In terms of demonstrating learning):**

- Effective: _________________________
- Needs Improvement: ____________

**Notes:**

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

**Strengths of the Classroom-Library Collaborative Work:**

- Notes: ____________________________

**Areas for Improvement in Collaborative Work:**

- Notes: ____________________________

**Resources, Materials, and Technology Tools:** Use the back of this sheet to note effective resources/materials/technology and areas for further development or improvement.

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