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Leadership: School Librarian Evaluation

by JUDI MOREILLON

TEACHER EVALUATION IS a hot topic in many school districts across the country. Spurred by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and other state or district level reforms, evaluation instruments for educators are under review. It is, therefore, important for school librarians to make sure that their evaluation, too, is an essential part of this review process. School librarians need to take a leadership role in suggesting the most effective ways to measure the impact of the librarian's role in the school system.

VALIDATION

In many states, teacher evaluation is or will be based, at least partially, on student achievement scores in standardized tests. This approach to evaluation presents a challenge for many school librarians who must provide specific information on which, if any, learning outcomes are taught and measured only in the library. One way to address this challenge in the library is to demonstrate the positive results of teaching by collecting formative assessment data. Librarians can validate their impact on instruction by using pre- and post-tests and assessments, graphic organizers, checklists, rubrics, and reflections, and combining these with the students' final products.

When school librarians co-teach classroom-library lessons and units of instruction, they can also help their colleagues show instructional improvements and measure the effects. As Zmuda and Harada attest, "Effective partnerships help teachers to meet their existing priorities, which include the implementation of a standards-based curriculum" (2008, 38). School librarians who practice effective instructional partnerships gather, assess, and share data that demonstrates how co-teaching results in improved student learning outcomes.

REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Just as the American Association of School Librar-

ians (AASL) *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* require students to self-assess so should school librarians engage in ongoing reflective practice and self-assessment. The AASL publication, *A 21st-Century Approach to School Librarian Evaluation*, presented as a workbook, includes a rubric that organizes the work of the school librarian into three parts with fourteen headings:

Teaching for Learning
    1.0 Building Collaborative Partnerships
    1.1 The Role of Reading
    1.2 Addressing Multiple Literacies
    1.3 Effective Practices for Inquiry
    1.4 Assessment in Teaching for Learning
Building the Learning Environment
    2.1 Planning and Evaluation
    2.2 Staffing
    2.3 Learning Space
    2.4 Budget
    2.5 Policies
    2.6 Collection and Information Access
    2.7 Outreach
    2.8 Professional Development
Empowering Learning through Leadership
    3.1 Leadership and Best Practices (AASL 2012, 16-17).

ZEROING IN

Research on the impact of the school librarians' work has long been correlated with improvements in students' reading and English language arts standardized test scores. School librarians, serving in CCSS states in particular, will want to pay close attention to "The Teaching for Learning" guidelines and to "The Role of Reading" section. In addition to the information found in the workbook, they can use the AASL *School Librarian's Role in Reading Toolkit* (http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools/toolkits/role-reading) to increase knowledge and improve practice in the area of reading comprehension strategies. School librarians can also review the

CCSS "6 shifts" especially in relationship to close reading, text complexity, and citing evidence (Pattison 2013). These are specific areas in which school librarians can demonstrate that classroom-library instruction is making a difference.

The "Effective Practices for Inquiry" section will also help align school librarians' work to current initiatives in teaching and learning. The CCSS use the term "research" when, in fact, these standards describe what the school librarian profession refers to as "inquiry." Inquiry is a student-centered approach to information problem solving in which learners immerse themselves in information and engage in reflection throughout the process. They develop and revise their own questions and gather resources and information independently to seek answers and solve information problems. Finally, students synthesize their understandings, self-assess and share their new knowledge, and once again engage in reflection at the end of the process. Integrating reading comprehension strategies using think-alouds into inquiry lessons is a required activity for school librarians whose goal is to make measurable improvements in students' reading proficiency while ensuring they are effective users and producers of ideas and information.

TELLING THE STORY

A quick self-assessment tool for school librarians, "School Librarian Self-Assessment: Five Roles of the School Librarian," (Moreillon and McKee 2010) outlines the five roles described in *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (AASL 2009). See "Use This Page" on page 59 of this issue of *School Library Monthly*. While it is up to the individual school librarian to determine criteria that indicate each level of proficiency on the Likert scale, with zero being the least developed to five representing exemplary practice, the tool provides a relative measure for strengths and weakness in each of the roles. This self-assessment can also be used by school librarians to guide their state and national conference session participation and professional development plans.

"School Librarian Self-Assessment: Five Roles of the School Librarian" (Moreillon and McKee 2010) has been used in presentations to preservice school principals enrolled in a supervision and curriculum course. This self-assessment tool provides a shorthand view of the various skills and responsibilities of a 21st-century school librarian and gives school administrators a one-page snapshot of what to expect in a library program. Preservice administrators who have reviewed this document are impressed with the range of the school librarian's expertise and the potential global impact of the library program on learning and teaching.

MEASURABLE DIFFERENCE

Being an essential part of the school's academic program is one way to be part of the solution to the literacy challenges that students and teachers face. While school librarians must demonstrate their value through exemplary practice in all five roles, their contributions to student learning must be most visible to library stakeholders. The educational environment is ripe for school librarians who strive to make a measurable difference in student learning outcomes. In this time of change, it behooves school librarians to set the bar high for their own contributions to the academic programs in their schools.

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American Association of School Librarians (AASL). *A 21st-Century Approach to School Librarian Evaluation*. American Association of School Librarians, 2012.

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Moreillon, Judi and Becky McKee. School Librarian Self-Assessment: Five Roles of the School Librarian. Assessment tool used in course presentations, School of Library and Information Studies, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX, 2010.

Pattison, Darcy. *Making the Common Core Practical: 6 Shifts in Learning: CCSS Style*. http://commoncorestandards.com/ela/6-shifts-in-learning-ccss-style (accessed July 18, 2013).

Zmuda, Allison, and Violet H. Harada. *Librarians as Learning Specialists: Meeting the Imperative for the 21st Century*. Libraries Unlimited, 2008.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

American Association of School Librarians (AASL). *School Librarian's Role in Reading Toolkit*. http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools/toolkits/role-reading (accessed July 14, 2013).

American Association of School Librarians. *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*. American Library Association, 2007. (Downloadable for free at: http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards).◄

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School Librarian Role Assessment Tool

The following tool was created by Judi Moreillon and Becky McKee at School of Library and Information Studies, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas. It can be used by school librarians to assess how well they are fulfilling the five roles outlined in the guidelines developed by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) for school librarians and programs (AASL 2009). See Moreillon's article on pages 24-25 of this issue of SLM.

SCHOOL LIBRARIAN SELF-ASSESSMENT: FIVE ROLES OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

▶Leader ▶Instructional Partner ▶Information Specialist ▶Teacher ▶Program Administrator

Based on the roles and descriptors found in *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (AASL, 2009, pp. 16-18).

ROLE	ASSESSMENT				
Leader:					
•Serves as teacher leader	1	2	3	4	5
•Takes a global view of the school	1	2	3	4	5
•Integrates 21st-century skills throughout the school environment	1	2	3	4	5
•Demonstrates commitment and knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
•Builds relationships and partnerships	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional Partner:					
•Develops policies, practices, curricula	1	2	3	4	5
•Collaborates with colleagues to codesign instruction, coteach, and coassess:					
•academic standards,	1	2	3	4	5
•critical thinking,	1	2	3	4	5
•technology and information literacy,	1	2	3	4	5
•social skills,	1	2	3	4	5
•and cultural competencies.	1	2	3	4	5
Information Specialist:					
•Integrates technology tools	1	2	3	4	5
•Creates engaged learning tasks	1	2	3	4	5
•Connects school with global community	1	2	3	4	5
•Models emerging technologies	1	2	3	4	5
•Models ethical use of information	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher:					
•Empowers students to become					
•critical thinkers,	1	2	3	4	5
•enthusiastic and strategic readers,	1	2	3	4	5
•skillful researchers,	1	2	3	4	5
•and ethical users of information.	1	2	3	4	5
•Follows trends in reading materials	1	2	3	4	5
•Advocates for resources in all formats	1	2	3	4	5
Program Administrator:					
•Provides equal access to resources	1	2	3	4	5
•Co-develops library's mission, strategic plan, and policies	1	2	3	4	5
•Manages staff, budget, and physical space	1	2	3	4	5
•Partners with stakeholders and other organizations	1	2	3	4	5
American Association of School Librarians. *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs.* Chicago: American Association of School Librarians, 2009.					