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DISCUSS THIS ISSUE OF KNOWLEDGE QUEST ONLINE!
Visit <http://knowledgequest.aasl.org> to post your thoughts on this issue.
Learner-ready school librarians tackle issues of substance from unique perspectives and in out-of-the-box ways. Think about it; we see all learners in the school. We impact all curricular areas, school initiatives, and the mission of the school. Where do school librarians fit in assessment and evaluation? This issue of Knowledge Quest is devoted to this topic and provides unique insight and ideas.

What’s the point of assessment and evaluation? We want to know what learners know and what they need to know. We want to understand how well we guided and facilitated learning, and what we should do next.

Consider the role questioning plays in evaluation. Can we assess learning by the questions learners ask? What can all learners learn from their own questions? How do we teach learners to reflect on their thinking?

I highly recommend watching Harvard professor Ron Ritchhart’s 2018 video “The Future of Learning.” Ritchhart asks, “What do you want the children we teach to be like when they are adults?” In his book Creating Cultures of Thinking (2015) and in the video, Ritchhart quotes the famous psychologist Lev Vygotsky when referring to enculturation: “Children grow into the intellectual life around them” (1978, 88). Ponder that; it begs school librarians to create library environments that challenge our learners’ growth as thinkers, knowledge builders, questioners, and creators.

So how do we do this? Start by helping learners ask good questions. In the video, Ritchhart tells the story of Isidor I. Rabi, 1944 Nobel laureate in physics, who was asked, “Why did you become a scientist, rather than a doctor or lawyer or businessman, like the other immigrant kids in your neighborhood?”

Dr. Rabi’s answer was profound: “My mother made me a scientist without ever intending it. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: ‘So? Did you learn anything today?’ But not my mother. She always asked me a different question. ‘Izzy,’ she would say, ‘did you ask a good question today?’ That difference—asking good questions—made me become a scientist!” (Sheff 1988)

If questioning is so powerful in fostering better learning, shouldn’t it be part of an effective school librarian’s repertoire? What standards embody this paramount learner attribute and how do school librarians incorporate questioning?

In the AASL Standards, the Shared Foundation Inquire literally catapults school librarians to a new level of practice, one that supports learners in the creation of new knowledge through questioning and reflection. This Shared Foundation, along with the other five, truly transform teaching and learning. How does Inquire relate to evaluation and assessment?

In their Knowledge Quest article “To Build a Better Question,” Sara Kelley-Mudie and Jeanie Phillips bril-
The Role of Questioning and Deep Thinking in the Learner-Ready School Library

The beauty of inquiry learning is that it can be implemented by educators at all levels in Guided Inquiry Design: A Framework for Inquiry in Your School (2012). This iterative process provides scaffolding for learners as they ask questions about a topic of interest and reflect on their learning and thinking.

In their Knowledge Quest article “Let It Go: The Power of Student-Generated Questions in Inquiry Learning,” Kelsey Barker and Paige Holden remind us that even when a learner provides an imperfect question, an opportunity is born. “The beauty of inquiry learning is that it allows for students to backtrack, rethink, and revise their questioning before continuing with their research” (2017, 41). Asking learners reflection questions helps them reframe inquiry.

In their Educational Leadership article “5 Strategies for Questioning with Intention,” Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick ask a pivotal question: “Do your questions encourage reflection?” They elaborate, “Reflection means not only drawing on and distilling past knowledge, but also applying or transferring that knowledge to new situations. Therefore, encouraging students to be reflective is an essential part of helping them become metacognitive thinkers and learners” (2015, 68).

Questioning provides a deep formative assessment tool for school librarians. The types of questions learners ask allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching and inform our next steps. The questions we ask ourselves become central to elevating our practice: Do learners need more support, differentiation, new strategies, more time? What did I do that was most impactful for learning? How can I make my instruction better? What does the Shared Foundation Inquire invite me to consider and do? How am I learning about questioning and inquiry techniques? Am I using the professional resources for school librarians that AASL provides through Knowledge Quest, webinars, and social media?

Likewise, questioning offers learners opportunities to assess their understanding. Small group conferencing can guide more-sophisticated question building. By scaffolding this process, deeper levels of questioning can evolve.

- What three things did you learn about….? What would you still like to know?
- Should you consider other approaches to….?
- Before we started learning about…., I knew... Now I know…. But what about….?
- How can you change your question?
- In what ways can it be a better, deeper question?

Be courageous as a leader who invites learners to adopt a questioning stance. Be a school librarian who impacts traditional thoughts around assessment and evaluation by providing a path for the role of questioning and deep thinking in your learner-ready school library that inspires the entire school community.

You’ve got this, learner-ready school librarian!

Kathryn Roots Lewis is director of libraries and instructional technology for Norman (OK) Public Schools. She is also the project director for a grant funded by an Institute for Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant for Learning in Libraries titled “Guiding Inquiry, Making and Learning in School Libraries.” In 2018 Kathryn received the Oklahoma Library Association’s Distinguished Service Award.

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Ritchhart, Ron. 2015. Creating Cultures of Thinking: The 8 Forces We Must Master to Truly Transform Our Schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.


Evaluation and assessment are pathways to transformation. Effective school librarians and librarian supervisors apply evaluation and assessment tools to transform learning outcomes, teaching practices, and library services. These “tools of the trade” provide school librarians with opportunities to adjust and improve, and, ultimately, innovate, their practices with new and better strategies to serve the needs of their learning communities. Evaluation and assessment are the ways school librarians determine how well they are doing in meeting their goals, in what areas they are strong, and in what areas they can focus further improvement efforts.

Today’s educational decision-makers are paying more attention to the inputs provided by learning environments, resources, and educators’ expertise. Evaluation and assessment hold adults accountable for improving learning environments, learning opportunities, and learning outcomes. The concept of assessment for learning (Stiggins and Chappuis 2012) focuses on deepening understanding and improvement rather than on meeting a standardized, sometimes high-stakes, target. Assessments imply that the topics, behaviors, or tasks under investigation are in progress and that interventions can still be enacted to improve outcomes; assessments are formative. Evaluations tend to be summative and conducted at the end of a learning event, a term of employment, or a change in process. Evaluation is often used to compare facilities, resources, learners, or school librarians and other educators to standards of excellence and achievement. Applied in the library setting, evaluation and assessment for learning place the emphasis on the learner, school librarian, and library.

Leading change based on data is a way to build credibility for change-makers and to gain support from decision-makers for the improvements under consideration. The feature articles in this issue focus on how school librarian leaders are using assessment and evaluation to support change processes in their districts and schools. Each author has identified a specific “problem” to address or solve. Each author has analyzed the problem and implemented changes the author believes will result in improved outcomes. Finally, every author has determined ways to evaluate these changes to ensure that library services and teaching have indeed become more effective as a result.

District librarian and technolibrarian Carolyn Foote in Eanes (TX) Independent School District near Austin set out to evaluate library spaces in her district. Carolyn’s goal was to ensure that updating school library facilities would be included in an upcoming bond initiative. Taking a collaborative approach, Carolyn first formed a district-level library advisory committee that included learners, educators, school librarians, technologists, administrators, and community members. She shared information with the committee about how school libraries could be configured to best support future ready learning and teaching. She developed a rubric that the team used when they visited every school in the district. After analyzing data, Carolyn and the library advisory
In her article, Jenny offers links to ALA 2018. Among other publications, Jenny designed and aligned the evaluation tool with AASL’s “School Library Evaluation Checklist” found in the National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries. In her article, Jenny offers links to resources, tools, and examples that other site- and district-level librarians can adapt and use to advocate for equity and quality in their school library collections.

In her role as specialist for libraries in the Calvert County (MD) Public Schools, Jennifer Sturge set out to create the conditions in which elementary school librarians in her district could take steps toward collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians. By working with school principals and other administrators, Jen was able to help schools that were ready to move toward a flexible schedule and collaborative model. Her goal—and the goal of her collaborators—was to ensure that learners could engage in increasingly effective and relevant, just-in-time learning facilitated by classroom–library coteaching. In her article, Jen shares testimonials from administrators and the lessons learned as bright spots of exemplary practice are leading the way toward positive change in Calvert County.

Misti Werle is the library coordinator for Bismarck (ND) Public Schools. She has been focusing professional development for librarians in her district on the distinctions among cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. Misti co-developed a “Levels of Library Services and Instructional Partnerships” self-assessment rubric to help school librarians analyze their practice. In the collaboration category, Bismarck librarians are using the rubric to guide and measure their role in coteaching project-based learning. Their goal is to improve learning while seamlessly integrating curriculum content and library standards. In this article, Misti, school librarian Kat Berg, and sixth-grade English language arts educator Jenni Kramer share their perspectives on their learning and implementation of classroom–library coteaching.

I wrap up the feature articles with a close look at the types of assessment and evaluation strategies school librarians can use as they coteach inquiry learning. When forming instructional partnerships with other educators, librarians co-plan, co-implement, and co-assess learning outcomes. Coteachers use various formative assessments to monitor learners’ progress, and provide timely, specific, and actionable feedback. Coteachers also use these data to adjust instruction during the inquiry process. At the conclusion of inquiry learning, learners use summative assessments to evaluate their achievement and to reflect on their experience. Coteachers analyze, evaluate, and reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction and the support the school library collection provided learners.

It has been said in education that what is considered “important” gets measured and what gets measured gets done. As demonstrated by the articles in this issue, evaluation and assessment can be used to determine the quality of inputs such as facilities, resources, and practices, as well as the proficiency of learners, educators, and school librarians. The authors in this issue have taken a collaborative approach to design and administer assessment tools, collect and analyze data, and make decisions informed by evidence. They are using data to evaluate and improve library learning environments, resources, instructional practices, and learning outcomes. As you read, we invite you to consider how you are currently assessing and evaluating your practice and how you can develop strategies to use data for continuous improvement in your library.

Judi Moreillon is a literacy and libraries consultant and a Lilead Project mentor. A former school librarian and retired school librarian educator, she is the author of four professional books published by ALA, three of which focused on classroom–library coteaching reading comprehension strategies. Judi’s most recent book is Maximizing School Librarian Leadership: Building Connections for Learning and Advocacy (ALA 2018). Among other publications, she contributed the literacy chapter in The Many Faces of School Library Leadership (Libraries Unlimited 2017). A twenty-eight-year ALA/AASL member, she blogs at SchoolLibrarianLeadership.com, tweets @CactusWoman, and administers the Maximizing School Librarian Leadership Facebook Group.

Work Cited:
FUTURE READY LIBRARY SPACES

A TEAM APPROACH TO DESIGNING

Carolyn Foote
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What better way to drive home your vision of future ready libraries than to redesign your library spaces? But across a district, too often, school librarians are tackling this task on their own. Creating a district-wide plan for modernizing school libraries helps a district approach the problem strategically. In Eanes (TX) Independent School District, a small suburban district near Austin, we spent a year purposefully analyzing our libraries in preparation for building better spaces for the future. We want our school library spaces to be future ready—flexible, mobile, creative, technology friendly, and instructionally active.

The lessons our team learned in undertaking this project can be applied across an entire district or used by a team in one library to assess and improve their space.

As district librarian, I had a wonderful opportunity to undertake this effort with support because I had been named part of the 2017–2018 Lilead Fellows cohort, a project led by Ann Carlson Weeks at the University of Maryland and Jeffrey DiScala from Old Dominion University. The Lilead Fellows Project gathers a group of district librarians from across the country and assigns them mentors for small teams. Professors Weeks and DiScala, the other mentors, and the Lilead Fellows work together through online coursework and in-person meetings so that each fellow can develop a project within his or her own district.

Getting Started

As part of Lilead, fellows developed action plans for our projects, plans that we updated periodically during the 2017–2018 academic year. In the action plan, we identified change goals, interested parties, set step-by-step guidelines, and identified potential partners. Creating an action plan and identifying potential partners (or adversaries) is a great way to start any large task for school library planning. I used the action plan carefully throughout the year, checking in to see if I had missed steps that I had planned to take. The plan proved not only to be a strategic document, but also a source of motivation when I hit roadblocks or was distracted by other tasks.

The Plan

Within my district, the plan was to set a vision for future ready library spaces in our district, and to assemble a district-wide library advisory committee to analyze each of our library spaces. We planned to make recommendations to the district at the end of the year, based on site visits, surveys of students and staff, analyses of programs, as well as on input from my Lilead colleagues and mentor. My goals—shared by the building-level librarians in our district—were to communicate the vision to all district leadership at the central office and building-level principals, and to present a plan to include funds for school library updates in our upcoming bond vote in 2019.

I began by assembling our library advisory committee. At our Lilead meeting in Norfolk in August 2017 we’d had several key discussions about potential partners led by John Chrastka, founder of EveryLibrary. We participated in an exercise for which we listed everyone in the community who might care about school libraries and have a stake in them—everyone from local police to the chamber of commerce to parents to local literacy groups. For my own committee, I decided I wanted to include parents (ones connected to our PTO or district foundation) and also a couple of local business leaders. I also wanted to include school librarians, educational technologists, classroom teachers at all grade levels, and students. In addition, I wanted to gather student input more broadly in a variety of other ways.

I spent a great deal of time identifying committee members that I didn’t know personally, especially parents who might have links to businesses. This was the most challenging part of the process for me, but it was interesting researching different community players and getting recommendations. I didn’t have quite as much success in this area as I wanted, but I reached out to several business leaders connected with our district’s business programs and influential parents on our education foundation, one of whom did join our team. I also reached out to community leaders and was thrilled that a staff member at our local children’s museum, a local Westbank Community Library librarian, and a University of Texas librarian who had guided redesign of their space were willing to be part of our committee.
The next ingredient was adding teachers I knew from across the district who were innovators or who were classroom furniture experts so that we could benefit from their viewpoint. One of the unexpected things that happened was that as our committee began to form, we had only two males who had agreed to serve. I was trying hard to balance the committee in so many ways that balancing for gender had escaped me. (Something I’ll pay closer attention to this year!)

I also included a district administrator and kept other administrators informed by e-mail throughout the process. Our assistant superintendent gave me the okay to go ahead with this plan, and we were off and running! To ensure participation, at the beginning of the process I sent the committee members invitations and dates for meetings. We had seven meetings, which included site visits of district schools, as well as visits to the brand-new Austin Public Library downtown (see figure 1), the University of Texas Perry Castañeda Library (see figure 2), and a new school library in a neighboring district.

Beginning the Process

The Lilead Fellows had an assignment to read a John Kotter article on leading change and eight ways change fails. The top reason change fails is that people don’t feel a sense of urgency (1995). How could I make redesigning our school libraries seem urgent to this combined group of people who had never met before? Did they even know that school librarians support student learning or classroom teaching? Did they know what our new AASL Standards were or even that we have standards? I envisioned this group not only as one that could give advice for our project, but also as future advocates for our libraries. What information would they need to begin to provide leadership for our organization?

Data was the key. I spent a great deal of time crunching data from the district—the age of our school libraries, square footage of each library and the number of students served, our circulation statistics district-wide, the number of activities each library hosted, and more. The graphs I created showing the age of each of our school libraries were especially impactful to developing a sense of urgency. It surprised even me how old the facilities were; 75 percent of our libraries hadn’t been renovated in twenty years. The square footage per pupil statistics also showed disparities throughout the district that the committee members would observe in person when they toured the spaces.

In my first presentation, I also shared the Future Ready Librarians Framework, the fact that new AASL Standards were upcoming, trends that libraries are facing, and photographs of what I considered future ready libraries. The committee’s homework was to watch the inspiring TED Talk by Michael Bierut “How to Design a Library that Makes Kids Want to Read” <www.ted.com/talks/michael_bierut_how_to_design_a_library_that_makes_kids_want_to_read?language=en>.

At our second meeting, we “speed dated” the new AASL Standards (which had by then become available)
by skimming them and then brainstorming how the standards might impact our district’s library spaces. The students on the committee had interesting insights here, especially identifying “time” and the school schedule as real barriers to using our school libraries. The student desire was clearly there, but access would be a problem at some campuses—a circumstance that gave us a future goal to work on.

Tours Begin

After these two meetings, we began our tours, three libraries per meeting. Normally we met after school, but all of the tours took place during work hours and our district generously provided substitutes for the teachers and librarians on the committee. Interspersed during these three months of Eanes library tours, we toured other spaces, too.

I knew I wanted a rubric to help us objectively evaluate the libraries, and again this is where my Lilead cohort was so helpful. Jenny Umbarger, one of my Lilead team members, was using a rubric for a library diversity walkthrough. She shared it with me, and I created a new rubric based on future ready goals to evaluate each aspect of our school library spaces. The rubric can be found at <www.oercommons.org/authoring/26202-library-space-walkthrough>.

Our district has 1:1 iPads. I would have done this rubric virtually, but not all committee members would have access. Therefore, we filled out the rubrics on paper (see figure 3). I included space for both a numeric ranking and descriptive notes on each rubric so we could really get a feel for committee members’ impressions of each library. I compiled the data after each visit.

After the first tours, I felt I needed a more graphic depiction of the committee’s impressions. The Center for the Future of Libraries had released a scatter plot rubric, which I modified for our use. Combining graphs from the whole committee gave us a visual representation of each library’s strengths and weaknesses. Also, during this same time, I asked our school librarians to interview students and, in combination with Google form surveys and Flipgrid.com videos, we gathered more student feedback about their vision for libraries.

Identifying Final District Recommendations

Our final two meetings involved pulling together data and findings into recommendations for the district. We also wanted to hone in on a mission statement or overarching statement about our school libraries. We did some “speed” mission statement writing at one of our meetings, looking at our district graduate profile, library standards, and our data. I gathered all of these mission statements for the committee to consider at the next meeting.

I also had somewhat painful brainstorming meetings with our own school librarians as we decided if we wanted to not only rebrand our
spaces but our name as well. After much discussion, we settled on the concept of the “libratory,” a term coined by Joyce Valenza for use in the school library/education field. It felt like it summarized the sort of space we wanted to create—one of experimentation and exploration of ideas and books. We also surveyed some students about names, and their feedback was fascinating and helpful. By the way, this is also where my work in Lilead helped. A book we read—StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath (Gallup 2007)—helped me learn how to approach different personalities and work through hard conversations.

At the final meeting, we organized recommendations under larger headings, like Critical and Creative Thinking, Technology in the Service of Learning, and so on. We grouped recommendations under each heading. What we found was that our recommendations about building future ready libraries evolved beyond just the “stuff” needed, but into policy and program recommendations as well.

For example, recommendations included adding staff at the middle schools so librarians could embed themselves in classrooms often, asking principals to examine the access provided to the library, asking elementary librarians to consider more flexible scheduling, and asking the district to include school librarians on the instructional partner team.

We also recommended increased use of mobile furniture, more mobile technology, and adding more TV monitors for promotional messages (realizing we are communicating with the YouTube generation). We wanted to glass-in quiet study and project rooms to support project creation and design for the diverse needs of students. We recommended mobile story steps instead of stationary ones to make elementary spaces more flexible, suggested rethinking and shrinking front desk areas, adding connections to the outdoors, and actually relocating one library to a more-central campus location.

**Follow-Up and Further Plans for Outreach**

I organized the data and recommendations into a slide presentation that we presented in May to our superintendent, district cabinet, district budget leader, and assistant superintendents. After I finished the presentation and fielded questions, I felt unsure about the impact on the audience. I realized what I had thought of as a one-year project was actually a much longer one. I also realized if I wanted to get these items into the bond planning for the next year, I had better begin right away creating a follow-up plan for year two.

A great deal of outreach was involved in this process. Though I’m a bit of an introvert, the advanced planning helped me feel more comfortable leading this effort. I also learned a lot about listening and asking others what their goals were, rather than rushing in with my goals. Most of all, I learned the power of the library advisory committee and am determined that I will always have one from now on.

In the 2018–2019 school year, our team meets during the school day for some meetings and after school for others so that we can accommodate different people’s schedules. We continue to learn from the perspective of classroom teacher and student members; they each have a unique vantage point that is very helpful to our process.

**Advice for Your Change Project**

If you are leading your own change project, strategically build a committee to support your effort. Make sure it is balanced. Communicate every step in the process to school leaders. Challenge your own leadership skills. Read widely in leadership texts. Make a strategic step-by-step plan and follow it. Seek help and find partners. Evaluate your process. Focus on your strengths. Be bold. And if you think you are being bold, ask yourself, “Is this bold enough?” Be brave. Find ideas to inspire and support you and put them in front of you on your desk.

Most importantly of all, think of your learners first in all that you do, instead of putting the library first. Then, organize your team and get going!

**Carolyn Foote**, a technolibrarian at a small suburban school district near Austin, Texas, is passionate about design for students. She is a member of the advisory group for ALA’s Center of the Future of Libraries, the advisory board for School Library Connection, and has been recently published in Texas Library Journal. She frequently presents for the Texas Computer Education Association, the Texas Library Association, and the International Society for Technology in Education. She feels honored to have been named a White House Champion of Change.

**Work Cited:**

What are ways to draw attention to the need for an annual library budget? How can school library leaders advocate for equitable library budgets across a school district? These are questions our library services team of three district librarians researched before taking the first steps toward making transformational change in our school libraries during the 2017–2018 school year. Sharing our journey and the resources we discovered and created may provide other school librarians and districts facing the same challenges with ideas and tools.

The Beaverton School District (BSD) is located in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon, and serves 41,000 students in 53 schools. At the elementary level, libraries are staffed by a paraprofessional library media assistant (LMA) in each school. Middle schools have one LMA and comprehensive high schools have two LMAs who stagger their schedules to provide coverage. Secondary schools also have a library and instructional technology teacher (LITT). The LITT is a licensed teaching position with a media endorsement indicated as preferred rather than required. LITTs are teacher leaders within their buildings who provide professional development and work with classroom teachers to innovate instruction and integrate technology use in teaching and learning.

Our library services team provides collection development, support, and professional development across the district. Library budgets in Beaverton are site-based, so they are determined by building principals. Oregon does not have required formulas for school library budgets, and school funding has historically been tight, so library budgets vary widely from school to school. This article describes the progress we made during the 2017–2018 school year and our preliminary plans for 2018–2019. (We are writing this in late summer 2018.) Readers will find resources from the Lilead Fellows Project and from other school library leaders, and tools our team used to convey and present information about our school libraries to building principals. Using collection and circulation data to inform principals about their libraries is an integral step to advocate for increased library budgets and/or changes in library procedures.

Connecting to Standards

Aligning work to district goals and national standards was one area of focus for the 2017–2018 Lilead Fellows cohort, of which I was a member. Creating a priority matrix

Table 1. Alignment of AASL “School Library Evaluation Checklist” criteria with Beaverton (OR) district school library program goals.
comparison of district goals with national standards was one of the activities we completed last year during the “Cultivating Individual and Team Leadership” Lilead short course. This matrix planning tool was shared by Erin Downey, district consulting librarian for the Boise School District and a Lilead Fellow in the 2015–2016 cohort [Downey 2015]. The planning tool can be used to align district goals with any set of standards, set priorities, and determine action steps. [Editor’s note: Resources referenced in square brackets are in the “Recommended Resources” list at the end of the feature.]

I used the matrix to compare several of our district library goals with AASL’s “School Library Evaluation Checklist” (AASL 2018, 174–80). This AASL checklist is a useful tool for school librarians and library staff at the district level to assess work in the Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage Shared Foundations. I pulled out one or more of the checklist items for each AASL Shared Foundation and inserted them in the left column of the planning tool, and placed three of our district library goals in the top row (see table 1). Within each of the remaining boxes, I described some of the projects and responsibilities of school and district library staff in these areas. To view, copy, and modify this template for use in other schools and districts, go to <http://bit.ly/samplematrix>. Having a foundation like this in place can be helpful before diving into a project such as the one described next regarding our preliminary work with elementary principals.

## Presenting to Elementary Principals

Prior to the spring of 2018, our library services team primarily communicated one-on-one with principals and e-mailed them with requests for library budget allocations. When our library services team was asked to be on the elementary leadership meeting agenda in the spring of 2018, we jumped at the opportunity to connect with principals about school libraries. This opportunity came about because of a conversation with Jared Cordon, our district’s administrator for elementary curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Jared Cordon and our team discovered we had shared values around access to quality books for all students and recognized that we needed to convey this vision for libraries across the district from our teaching and learning department.

Using collection and circulation data to inform principals about their libraries is an integral step to advocate for increased library budgets and/or changes in library procedures.
For the first presentation to principals, we chose to focus on three main areas: choice reading, diverse books, and access to books for all. We created an Adobe Spark page so we could include our talking points and several images in a format that differed from a typical slide deck. We used images from a photo library we have been building that features our students using our school libraries. Most of these images were taken by our future ready communications specialist and others were taken by our library services team.

One of the advocacy tools we used during the Lilead Fellows 2017–2018 year was the 27–9–3 Message. John Chrastka, founder and executive director of EveryLibrary, shared this tool and encouraged us to craft succinct messages that speak to the values and beliefs of various stakeholders. The structure of the 27–9–3 message is a statement with twenty-seven words that can be delivered in nine seconds, and contain three messages. The 27–9–3 message I created for my project was:

Our libraries support student growth as learners. We encourage students to explore their interests and provide access for all to carefully selected resources that are current and diverse.

My 27–9–3 message ties directly into the “Choice Reading in BSD Libraries” Adobe Spark page we created for principals. This page is available online at <http://bit.ly/choicereading>. We encourage librarians to use and modify the ideas from our presentation, as many of them are universal and can easily be applied to other settings. Background information about the main talking points is included in figure 1.

Choice Reading

Choice reading is an important component of our current K–12 language arts program. Classroom libraries were purchased several years ago to surround students with books in elementary classrooms and secondary language arts classes. While funding for school library collections was not part of the English language arts curriculum adoption, the concept of classroom libraries provides a conversation starter about how school libraries differ from classroom libraries and the need to budget to maintain and enhance these collections. School libraries have the latest and greatest new releases and offer the complete set of books in a series, whereas classroom libraries typically only have the first book in a series and do not receive regular additions over the course of the school year.

Choice reading looks different in the school library than in the classroom. We organize books for ease of access, but do not level our school libraries. We encourage students to explore their own interests. As a result, they may be reading at, below, or above their identified reading level. Communicating about these differences is a work in progress as it takes time to convey to parents and classroom
In BSD, we created district-wide guidelines in the spring of 2018 so students may have up to five books checked out at a time and all students can borrow materials, regardless of fines. Principals applauded upon hearing about these new guidelines and the focus on getting books in the hands of students.

Within our presentation, we included talking points for handling book concerns because some of our community members did not feel that George by Alex Gino should be on the statewide 2018–2019 Oregon Battle of the Books (OBOB) list. OBOB is a voluntary program, and students may choose which books to read from the list. With all book challenges, our goal is for parents to feel heard and to be given options to express their thoughts within the school or classroom so concerns are resolved at the school level before becoming a formal request for an item’s reconsideration.

Access for All

Historically, individual schools in Beaverton established their own circulation practices. Despite the goal for our school libraries to be happy, welcoming places, some students were being turned away from checking out books because of lost or damaged materials. We researched how circulation practices were changing across the country and found incredibly helpful resources that cemented our thinking and provided evidence to support the need to modify our practices. Please see the “Recommended Resources” list following this article for documents, presentations, and blog posts from leaders in the library field, including a Colorado State Library report by Meg Johnson Depriest, blog postings by Jennifer LaGarde, a presentation by Katie Salmela, presentations by Rita Ramstad, and a presentation by Suzanna Panter and her colleagues.

In BSD, we created district-wide guidelines in the spring of 2018 so students may have up to five books checked out at a time and all students can borrow materials, regardless of fines. Principals applauded upon hearing about these new guidelines and the focus on getting books in the hands of students. Library staff are encouraged to work with their administrators and counselors to identify when fines should be waived. There is also built-in flexibility for schools to start slowly, for example with kindergarten students, and increase the number of checkouts as the year progresses.

This presentation provided our first opportunity to begin talking about the need to develop budgets to replace lost library materials. Jared Cordon introduced our library services team to the concept of library books as consumables; this has been a useful way to convey that library books need to be replenished and are not meant to last forever.

Creating Library Collection Reports

Later in the spring of 2018, we were asked to do a follow-up segment with elementary principals to further the discussion about library budgets. We knew we needed to provide them with specific information about each school’s library. We initially hoped to create infographics for each school. However, we had a tight timeline and decided to create a simple one-page Library Collection Google Doc template that we duplicated and customized for each school. Here is a sample report from one of our elementary schools <http://bit.ly/libreportsample>. An excerpt is in table 2.
In the text above the data table, we conveyed our values about access and choice reading through this statement:

BSD libraries are accessible and a resource to all. Materials are purchased to support the learning of all students and encourage them to explore their own reading interests.

We decided to begin with a library budget recommendation for print materials before continuing with information about the school’s library collection. We decided to recommend a minimum amount that would be realistic and achievable for each school, so we set this at $2,000 for elementary, $3,000 for middle school, and $5,000 for high school. We also included a recommended budget range for each level. We referenced two articles from *School Library Journal*: “SLJ’s Average Book Prices for 2018” and the “School Library Spending Report 2018” [SLJ Staff 2018]. The download of the full spending report requires filling out a short online form [Takeda 2018].

Due to the challenge of tracking varied funding sources such as the general library budget, book fair profits, parent organizations, and donated books, we decided to report on the total dollar amount of all library books added to the collection using each item’s price as recorded in our Follett Destiny database. The drawback to this approach is that it can make the investment in the library collection look deceptively robust because the additions may primarily have been donations. To encourage quality donations, we post and share this Library Book Donations Guidelines document on the district website [http://bit.ly/bkdonations] and catalog materials centrally so donations can be reviewed before they are added to library collections.

To create the library statistics, we built a series of six reports using Report Builder in Destiny on books added and books lost for 2015–2016, 2016–2017, and 2017–2018. We numbered the reports 1–6 followed by a short description such as “1:Books Added: 2015–16.” After making the reports available for all sites within the district, we navigated to each site and ran the series of reports. Having them grouped together from 1–6 allowed us to quickly run each report. We also used the Library Statistics report in Destiny for the circulation data used in each collection report.

For Destiny users, we shared the XML files for reports 1–6 so they can be imported and modified. To download the reports, go to this Google Drive folder [http://bit.ly/6reportstemplates]. After downloading the XML files, use the Import Setup button in Report Builder to import each report individually. The reports can then be edited to include information pertinent to other schools and districts.

After running all the reports and filling out the Library Collection Google Doc, we completed a spreadsheet with totals for lost books, books added, and circulations per student so we could compile averages by school level for these categories. The elementary averages include data from our three K–8 schools. Then we sent an e-mail to each principal with a link to the school’s Library Collection Google Doc. We included an explanation of the nuances of each set of numbers using a Communication to Elementary Principals.

**ELEMENTARY LIBRARY COLLECTION EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Age of Books</strong></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Books Added</strong></td>
<td>472 – $6,412</td>
<td>392 – $5,659</td>
<td>403 – $4,856</td>
<td>475 – $5,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Checkouts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per student</td>
<td>51 checkouts</td>
<td>45 checkouts</td>
<td>55 checkouts</td>
<td>40 checkouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Based on 25,996 total circulations &amp; 501 students]</td>
<td>[Based on 21,135 total circulations &amp; 468 students]</td>
<td>[Based on 24,476 total circulations &amp; 447 students]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Items Lost</strong></td>
<td>171 ($1,996)</td>
<td>164 ($1,739)</td>
<td>268 ($2,502)</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Excerpt from elementary library collection report.*
A long-term goal is to establish a

Collection reports in August 2018

Looking Ahead

At the time this article was submitted for publication, it was too early to see the impact on library budgets resulting from these communications with principals. We plan to update these reports annually and modify and adjust them as we discover better ways to present the information in a compelling manner to principals. Future plans include presenting to secondary principals about the school libraries and budgets, and continuing conversations with elementary principals. A long-term goal is to establish a district funding formula for library budgets, giving principals guidelines for funding their schools’ libraries as they weigh many needs within their buildings. As school budgets fluctuate from year to year, it is important to continue advocating for our students’ needs by evaluating library collections, sharing these data points with principals, and establishing library budgets to cultivate collections with current, diverse, and relevant library materials for all.

Recommended Resources:

Jenny Takeda is one of a team of three district librarians for the Beaverton (OR) School District. She and her teammates Emily Carlson and Jen Blair provide leadership, professional development, and support for over seventy library staff and are part of Beaverton’s Instructional Innovation team. Jenny cofacilitates a professional learning community of district librarians from the Portland Metro area and is secretary for the Oregon Association of School Libraries. She was a Lilead Fellow during the 2017–2018 school year.

Work Cited:

Assessing Readiness for School Library Collaboration

Jennifer Sturge
sturgej@calvertnet.k12.md.us
In many elementary schools across the nation the library looks like a revolving door of classes. Classroom teachers come and drop off their classes for a lesson at a set time during the week. The school librarian teaches a lesson in isolation while the classroom teacher has a planning period. There is little time for collaboration. There is even less time for students to engage in meaningful, authentic activities and research that offer deeper meaning. This antiquated scheduling model of elementary school libraries has been a traditional part of schools for many years. It is time for change.

The National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries identify Collaborate as a Shared Foundation for students, school librarians, and the school library. The Key Commitment states that to collaborate is to value working "effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals" (AASL 2018, 85). Preparing school librarians to collaborate with classroom teachers allows librarians to achieve their own Collaborate competencies and to model standards for learners—while also helping them achieve Collaborate competencies. In addition, collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians creates a learning environment in which learners more fully understand that learning is a social responsibility.

As a 2017–2018 Lilead Fellow and as a district-level school librarian leader, I was charged with planning and implementing a high-impact project that would positively affect my district by bringing about transformational change. In my role as specialist for school libraries for Calvert County (MD) Public Schools, and a former elementary-level school librarian, one of my highest priority goals has always been to move elementary schools toward a school library model that looks more like the libraries in middle and high schools. I want all students to have the advantage of learning in an environment in which librarians work directly with classroom teachers and students on authentic research projects, technology skills, and literacy.

Thinking about the benefits of a flexible schedule, it struck me that this was not just a schedule change, but a change in culture. Elementary schools and their libraries needed to shift from a culture of the librarian teaching in isolation to a culture of collaboration: librarians working directly with teachers to plan and execute a unit of study. The tricky part was devising a way to make this happen with no additional funding.

My big questions as I started planning my Lilead project boiled down to:

1. Why is a collaborative model not happening in elementary schools?
2. What would a collaborative model of instruction look like in an elementary school?
3. How will I know when a school is ready to move toward a collaborative model?
4. What supports can I put in place to assist with this transformation?
5. How will school administrators and I measure the success of the collaborative model?

The collaborative model of instruction is more than thinking in terms of the school library having a flexible schedule. The flexible schedule is the mechanism that makes high-impact collaboration between the classroom teacher and the librarian possible. Collaboration is defined by Merriam-Webster as “to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor” (2018). When schools have a library program model in which students are dropped off in the school library to provide classroom teachers with planning time, little to no collaboration can occur. It was time to start assessing our readiness as a district to make a move from isolation in the library to collaboration between the classroom teacher and the school librarian becoming the norm.

Assessing Readiness

Knowing what classroom teachers needed and wanted from the school library was the first step. To begin assessing readiness for collaboration, classroom teachers in Calvert County were sent a voluntary survey regarding collaboration with the school librarian. The survey found that most respondents thought that they had little to no opportunity to collaborate with their school librarian. Teachers listed barriers to collaboration, including lack of time, lack of common planning periods, and not knowing the services that the school library could provide (see figure 1). The survey also revealed that the majority of classroom teachers believed that collaboration between the school librarian and the classroom teacher would result in a positive experience for both the teacher and the students (see figure 2).

Assessing Administrator Buy-In

Assessing and getting administrator buy-in to move forward with a collaborative model of instruction was the second phase. To achieve successful implementation, the entire school community must understand how collaboration works. Everyone must realize how collaboration can spark authentic learning experiences and result in improved
student outcomes. Since all educators involved must be ready to implement a collaborative model of instruction, how does the librarian leader assess administration buy-in and how do administrators assess classroom teachers’ readiness for a collaborative model of instruction?

The Lilead Fellowship experience provided me with the tools I needed to talk with our district administrators about my vision for elementary school libraries. As part of the transformational change process, I crafted my mission statement for my project:

In a collaborative setting, elementary school libraries make personal connections, so all students can experience an excellent school library program to explore, learn, and ignite their passion for learning.

Speaking with principals, sharing my vision for a collaborative library, and outlining the benefits of collaboration between the school librarian and the classroom teacher was one of the hardest things I’ve done as the district-level specialist for school libraries. I was asking administrators to make a shift—to think differently without offering them anything other than my support and ideas in exchange. While I spoke, I assessed their readiness for a collaborative library as I watched facial expressions, body language, and fielded questions. I needed a school community willing to think outside of the box. I outlined the benefits of a collaborative library model for the elementary principals:

- When collaboration happens, authentic learning experiences are embedded across school experiences; lessons are no longer taught in isolation.
- Collaborative teaching fosters an increase in skills for students, classroom teachers, and librarians.
- Collaboration deepens the culture of reading in school communities, and inquiry is fostered and nurtured.
- Classroom teachers and students are afforded more time to explore and create.
- Content standards are integrated by school librarians and classroom teachers.
- There are additional opportunities for job-embedded professional development for educators.

A few days after presenting to principals, the phone rang. The administrators at Windy Hill Elementary were ready and willing to take on this project. They had just hired a brand-new school librarian and were ready to make the change.

When assessing the readiness of her building to make a change, principal Kelly Cleland felt that the time was right for Windy Hill Elementary to shift to a collaborative library.
because what she considered to be preconditions for a successful implementation had been met:

- Classrooms in grades 3–5 had 1:1 laptops.
- The school librarian was willing to embrace implementation of a flexible/collaborative model.
- Teachers at Windy Hill had previously embraced changes to the teaching model.

As Joy H. McGregor reported in 2002, principals identified the two biggest barriers to implementing a collaborative schedule as initial reluctance or inexperience of the teachers and how to cover the teacher planning time with no additional staffing. Even with the preconditions listed above in place, these barriers were issues at Windy Hill Elementary School. To provide teachers with planning time, Windy Hill administrators there were willing to invest their own time and energy.

Here’s how Windy Hill Principal Kelly Cleland described their solution:
Providing collaboration training is essential. Most teachers at the elementary level do not have the experience of working hand in hand with the school librarian.

readiness for collaboration among classroom teachers, the school librarian must nurture relationships with and among the other educators in the school. School librarians can take the following actions well in advance of planning to shift to a collaborative model of teaching:

• Seek out classroom teachers and be proactive in asking about what is happening in their classrooms and suggest resources.

• Provide professional development on technology to establish credibility as an instructor.

• Attend professional learning community meetings whenever possible.

• Volunteer to serve on or lead committees.

• Highlight resources and activities happening in the school library in a newsletter, on a webpage, or via social media—or wherever teachers are sure to see what the librarian is doing.

• Offer to complete parts of classroom projects in the school library, such as creating the multimedia presentation or doing research on a topic in the classroom teachers’ curriculum.

The school librarian’s being a valued part of the school community goes a long way toward helping classroom teachers feel ready to share their students, curriculum, time, and space with the librarian. When teachers feel that the librarian is an equal partner on the instructional team, they are ready to begin collaborating in earnest. At first, some teachers may be unsure or not quite ready to dive in with two feet, so start with those who are ready. As more and more teachers see how collaboration works for the benefit of student learning, more will embrace collaboration.

Implementation of our vision for collaboration at Windy Hill Elementary School started slowly but with an activity that made a big impact. Vice principal Lisa Morgan and I modeled a collaborative unit in each grade level, filling the role of classroom teacher and librarian respectively. We modeled the planning and execution of the collaboration.

Initially, the Windy Hill administrators set the expectation for teachers to collaborate with the school librarian on one project per quarter to ensure that every student and teacher started the collaboration process. As more and more teachers saw the value of collaboration, the school librarian’s schedule filled.

Providing collaboration training is essential. Most teachers at the elementary level do not have the experience of working hand in hand with the school librarian. One strategy is to offer specific professional development workshops that focus on specific strategies to use when collaborating.

Possible topics include:

• exploration of collaboration and coteaching models,
• planning together,
• reviewing curriculum together,
• figuring out who is responsible for what part of the lesson,
• and creating rituals for the teachers, librarian, and students. (Rituals can include ideas such as “When the teacher is teaching ________, the librarian is doing ________.”)

By establishing norms and rituals, everyone has a role, and no one is left waiting or without a task. We opted to start our collaborative model by focusing on the station rotation coteaching model, in which small groups of learners move from one activity to another during the learning project. By learning how to best use the station rotation model in the school library, we were able to harness the power of the classroom teacher’s content knowledge, and the expertise of the school librarian in technology and research. Our stations consisted of a teacher–led station, a librarian–led station, and our independent station was the checkout station, where students browsed and checked out a book before beginning independent work.
Students quickly adapted to this new model of teaching and learning. A survey administered to students at the end of the year showed they were now more willing to ask the school librarian for assistance with an information need than they were when asked at the beginning of the year. Students ended the school year viewing the collaboration as having two teachers in the room, not just one.

Timing and Commitment

As with life changes, there will never be the perfect time to implement a collaborative model of instruction and move from a fixed schedule to a collaborative model. We hit several roadblocks along the way. We had to make some changes to schedules and work through some issues that we hadn’t anticipated.

One barrier that we did not anticipate was that parents would question the change from their children attending a library class on a fixed schedule and moving to a collaborative model. Parents were worried students would not have an opportunity to check out books. School administration communicated with parents the reasons for the collaborative model, and as parents began to see the benefit, some fears were eased and circulation statistics grew.

Another unexpected barrier that cropped up was teachers’ resistance to collaborating and finding the time to work with the school librarian. This barrier was eased as we provided professional development and made more planning time available for collaboration.

Money, time, and staffing will continue to be barriers for many, but those obstacles should not stop the effort to move forward with collaborative scheduling in the elementary school library.

Starting the Process at Your School

As a school librarian, plant the seed with your school administration or with your district leader of school libraries. Identify what problem is important to your administration and make the school library part of the solution. Make a case. Give compelling arguments. Every principal looks for additional ways to provide professional development to the teaching staff. Implementing collaborative planning and teaching allows the school librarian to practice job-embedded professional development directly with classroom teachers in the areas of technology integration, research, and project-based learning. Tie student success on state and national standards to the imple-
Jennifer Sturge is the teacher specialist for school libraries and instructional technology for Calvert County (MD) Public Schools. She is a Lilead Fellow and a lifelong learner. Currently, Jennifer collaborates with high school librarian Donna Mignardi on a blog for ALA’s Programming Librarian in which they write about information literacy programming. She is an AASL member and serves as a member at large for the Maryland Association of School Librarians.

If you’re not sure your building is ready to tackle collaboration head on, try piloting with a small group of classroom teachers or with one grade level. Share your successes and keep reliable data. These actions will assist you in making the case to move forward with collaboration with more teachers or additional grades. Take baby steps. Students and classroom teachers deserve meaningful access to school library resources and your expertise—the expertise of a collaborating school librarian.

Final Thoughts

When I embarked on this journey with the Lilead project and my district, I was hoping to succeed but was also prepared to fail. After all, how could this project take off without funding? Through the sheer determination of everyone who has recognized the benefits to students and worked along the way with me, we’re moving slowly but surely to a more collaborative approach in our elementary school libraries. I feel hopeful, positive, and excited for the future of collaborative libraries and their positive impact in Calvert County Public Schools.

Works Cited:


IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Evaluation and Assessment for Learning
& EVALUATING
PARTNERSHIPS

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Misti Werle
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Bismarck (ND) Public Schools is a district full of innovative leaders who challenge themselves to transform the educational system to ensure graduating students are college, career, and community ready. Our community, educators, stakeholders, and students feel it is important to offer authentic, educative experiences and promote students’ development of what we call “success skills.” Success skills are the traits we want our ideal graduates to possess when they enter college or the workforce. These skills include creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, the 4Cs. Our method of instruction (PBL).

In addition to our having district full of innovative leaders who challenge themselves to transform the educational system to ensure graduating students are college, career, and community ready. Our community, educators, stakeholders, and students feel it is important to offer authentic, educative experiences and promote students’ development of what we call “success skills.” Success skills are the traits we want our ideal graduates to possess when they enter college or the workforce. These skills include creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, the 4Cs. Our method of instruction (PBL).

In an effort to carry out the work of the district, while implementing AASL’s National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries, we have started training school librarians to be the backbone of the project-based learning movement. The school library is a natural vehicle to drive transformation when improving PBL teaching practices and implementing inquiry learning. As instructional leaders, school librarians can support and deliver teacher training and facilitate students’ project creation. We can support implementation by coteaching and collaborating with classroom teachers on their projects. We are masters at finding and providing resources that encourage sustained inquiry and can support reflective teaching practices by modeling and facilitating positive, collaborative experiences.

Bismarck Public Schools’ goals of integrating PBL across all grade levels to better meet the needs of the 21st-century student can be strengthened through a strong school library. As student projects are being developed, school librarians are there to support learners and their classroom teachers through design, implementation, assessment, revision, and reflection. This effective support has opened the door in some buildings for school librarians to begin coteaching with classroom teachers in an effort to provide seamless integration of content and school library standards.

A District-Level Perspective: Misti Werle

When we had our metaphoric foot in the PBL door, our next step as a department was to create a plan to strengthen coteaching skills. As the district-level library media systems innovator, I realized that the definition of “collaboration” varied across the district’s libraries. The spectrum was wide, with some school librarians seeing their role as resource gathering while others were aiming for complete collaboration from project design through implementation, assessment, and reflection. My next step as a leader was to create an action plan to strengthen our effectiveness as school librarians by increasing collaboration and coteaching experiences with classroom teachers.

We needed a clear definition before we could move forward with an action plan. Through my work with the Lilead project, I was fortunate enough to be introduced to amazing school library leaders across the nation who could support Bismarck schools in this journey. Through these mentorships and collaborative partners, I created an action plan for implementing more collaboration across the district. Our first job was to define collaboration.

Using Judi Moreillon’s work on coteaching by school librarians and classroom teachers, we developed a rubric to clarify our levels of library services. The rubric defines the differences between cooperation,
### Levels of Library Services and Instructional Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Type of Service</th>
<th>Subtype</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coplanning Required</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Team Teaching</td>
<td>After collaborative planning, educators coteach by assuming different roles during instruction, such as reader or recorder or questioner and responder, modeling partner work, role playing or debating, and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coordinating</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Parallel Teaching</td>
<td>Each educator works with a portion of the class to teach the same or similar content using the same or different modalities. Groups may switch or reconvene as a whole class to share, debrief, and/or reflect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cooperating</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Station Teaching</td>
<td>After determining curriculum content for multiple learning stations, each educator takes responsibility for facilitating one or more learning centers, while in other centers, students work independently of adult support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coplanning Required</td>
<td>(see above)</td>
<td>Alternative Teaching</td>
<td>One educator pre-teaches or re-teaches concepts to a small group while the other educator teaches a different lesson to the larger group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A brief conversation about a lesson topic or objective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A brief conversation about a lesson topic or objective</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 1. Comparison of collaboration, coordination, and cooperation in teaching.

coordination, and collaboration (see figure 1). To learn more about the top tiers of collaboration/coteaching, we hosted a training session presented by educational consultant and author Anne Beninghof. All school librarians invited a classroom teacher to attend the workshop to learn a variety of teaching models. We used this training to deepen our understanding of collaboration and coteaching, and then set out to practice and strengthen our instructional partnerships.

Over the course of the 2017–2018 school year all school librarians collected collaboration data. They reported the amount of time they were spending at each level of the rubric and how many teachers they were working with each month. The amount of time school librarians had collaborated at a high level doubled over the course of the year as a result of our focused work in this area.

### Horizon Middle School Librarian’s Perspective: Kat Berg

One of my goals this past school year was to assess my coteaching prowess using the “Levels of Library Services and Instructional Partnerships” rubric (see figure 1) as a guide. To that end, Bismarck’s middle school librarians turned this rubric into a Google survey. Based on the responses that I received from Horizon Middle School staff, I believed this survey could be an effective communication and feedback tool. Each month as I planned upcoming projects with teachers, I referred to the rubric to ensure that I was providing the highest level of service and partnership based on student learning outcomes.

I understood that school librarians were equal partners with classroom teachers when designing instruction to achieve shared goals and specific learning objectives and assessments. We were co-implementing lessons using a variety of teaching strategies based on the needs of our students. I realized, however, that I could “level up” my coteaching game by sharing more responsibility for assessing and analyzing student learning outcomes. With a ratio of one school librarian per 1,200 students in grades 6 through 8, the challenge was finding an effective way to co-monitor student progress throughout entire projects.

Three years ago, Horizon’s visionary new principal Dr. Tabby Rabenberg invited the instructional leadership team to attend Colorado’s Innovation Summit. This was a transformational experience for me. I returned to Horizon determined to transform our beautiful but oh-so-traditional school library into a 21st-century student-centered “Discovery Den.” (We are the Horizon Huskies, after all!) My first step was to rewrite our Horizon Library mission and vision statements to encapsulate North Dakota Library and Technology Content Standards (available at [www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/87/lib_tech.pdf](http://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/87/lib_tech.pdf)), AASL Standards.
PBL competencies, and the 4Cs +1
(Conten:)

Horizon’s Discovery Den empowers students to be enthusiastic readers, fearless innovators, critical thinkers, skillful researchers, and responsible users of information. Just as the role of teachers has evolved from “sage on the stage” to facilitator, guide, activator, and catalyst, the Discovery Den is an extension of the classrooms, with inviting and innovative spaces and tools to personalize learning. When Horizon students are provided with differentiated opportunities to think critically, collaborate, create, and communicate, they are empowered to “own” their education!

After enthusiastically sharing my vision with literally everyone who crossed my path, coworkers and team built:

- a Literacy PAW for literacy collaboration,
- a Reader PAW for ZONE Reading (independent voluntary reading) and Literature Circles,
- two Digital PAWs (with big-screen TVs hooked up to Chromebooks) for small-group projects like video editing,
- a Studio PAW for audio and video production,
- a Present PAW for presenting and practicing presentations,
- a Maker PAW for hands-on projects, and
- a brand-new STEAM PAW! The Science Technology Engineering Arts Math PAW, which is adjacent to the Discovery Den, was the brainchild of our principal, Dr. Tabby Rabenberg. Keeping our student-centered approach in mind, I asked my LEGO/makerspaces advisors to be the project managers. They rose to the occasion by teaching themselves how to use Google SketchUp to design the space. They also did their research and created a “Wish List” of furniture and supplies. We spent our summer vacation transforming the old orchestra room into an amazing new innovative space that is big enough for entire classes to use. It has a LEGO wall, chalkboard wall, whiteboard tables and board, a project bulletin board, an ActivBoard, workbenches on wheels, and tons of crafts and supplies. During library orientation, a group of students suggested creating a “Husky Service” center where students could bring in electronics to take apart and try to fix them (if broken).

Students can now go to the Horizon Discovery Den website <www.bismarckschools.org/domain/510> and click the “Reserve a PAW” link, determine what they need and when they need it, and then sign up for a PAW if it is available, thus empowering them to discover their “PAWSibilities”! Students (and you) can follow us on Twitter @HMSDiscoveryDen.

Bismarck schools’ focus is on promoting students’ development of “success skills” through authentic PBL experiences. My eureka moment came as I was walking over Memorial Bridge this past summer listening to Ted Dintersmith’s What Schools Could Be on audiobook. Ted insightfully points out that it “take[s] a village” to design and implement innovative PBL activities (Dintersmith 2018).

He praised Bismarck, North Dakota, for receiving the first-ever PBL District Champion Award from the Buck Institute for Education. He has told school districts in New York, Boston, and Palo Alto, California, “Bismarck could blow you away.”

To become true instructional partners, our school librarians need to assess our collaborative impact on student learning and strengthen our instructional practices accordingly. As a member of Horizon’s Frontline Innovation Award Winner Vision 2030 team and other PBL projects—such as the powerful nanotechnology project that coteacher and collaborator Jenni Kramer describes in detail below—I am involved in the entire learning process as a true instructional partner. As Horizon students discover their individual talents and passions in a safe, supportive environment designed around the Elements of Learner Agency in Stage Three PLE [Personalized Learning Environment]: voice, choice, engagement, motivation, ownership, purpose, and self-efficacy (Bray and McClaskey 2016). I can model, teach, and guide students to “monitor their progress and reflect on their learning during the entire learning process” (Bray and McClaskey 2017, 132). As a result, students intensify their understanding about a topic, strengthen their own learning, and identify areas in which they need to develop further (Bray and McClaskey 2017). In other words, they are owning their education! I believe that the key to assessing and analyzing student learning outcomes throughout an entire project is for me to become a full-fledged member of each PBL team!

A Horizon Classroom Teacher’s Perspective: Jenni Kramer

Collaboration between a school librarian and classroom teacher has changed significantly over the years. What once began as, “Can you find
these books for me?” evolved into, “I have this idea. What can we do to explore—and possibly—explode it?” Sometimes during a teacher’s career, finding that special school librarian who is willing to work with teachers and go above and beyond learning in the classroom can be a challenge. Fortunately, I have been blessed with two such colleagues.

A dear friend Jan Schmidt and I worked together in an elementary school setting for twelve years and co-created many opportunities for students to grow and learn in meaningful ways. We both loved trying new things and exploring learning opportunities with our students not only in the school library, but beyond the school walls as well. She helped me catch the bug for using the school library not only for book checkout, but as a space to challenge how we learn and what we could use to engage in that learning process. Jan sparked that flame for me.

When I moved to a middle school I discovered that my new librarian, Kat, was as excited as I was to work together on projects and learn with our students. Our efforts to collaborate produced many projects, and the school library space became an extension of my classroom. At Horizon, we start each year by involving all sixth-grade students in a tour of the school library and a review of procedures, areas for students to use, and the technology available to them. We continue learning about the space by looking at how to reserve books, research databases, order materials, use the green screen, the collaboration areas, and other PAWS. Once the students have a working understanding of the space, we are ready to explore our chosen topics for our assignments, Genius Hour (a chunk of time in which students can explore answers to their own questions unrelated to curriculum), and PBL activities.

Most of our big writing projects for the school year center around PBL opportunities. Our core content-area teaching team (Team Inspire) chooses a theme or topic, usually from a science or social studies perspective, and develops an interdisciplinary learning experience for the students. Within that experience, students are given voice and choice in their research or problem-solving activities. Once the layout of the PBL is established, I look to the school librarian to enrich student learning. Since our English language arts and school librarian standards blend effortlessly, it is almost a seamless process to join forces in these projects. We see similar or overlapping standards that make our collaboration that much stronger.

A Sample Collaborative PBL Project

My (Jenni’s) teaching team, Team Inspire, created a learning opportunity called NANO PBL. We started with a whole concept-driving question to begin our learning: “How is nano science or technology changing our world?” We created a flow chart of core subject learning opportunities from every team teacher—opportunities that aligned with our standards and PBL topic. We then created a student version of a product work plan with S.M.A.R.T. goals: goals that are specific, measurable, assignable, relevant, and time-related (Doran 1981). We also included rubrics for the 4Cs and content-area objectives. As the English teacher on the team, my goal was to teach the research, informative writing, and presentation standards throughout the PBL process. To do this, I brought this PBL idea to our school librarian Kat, and we collaborated by aligning our standards within this work. At that point we found the "Levels of Library Services and Instructional Partnerships" rubric to be extremely helpful in our planning process.
Once we taught the students the skills necessary to begin their research, students formed collaboration groups based on common ideas. These collaboration groups began by writing their “need to know” list of questions, a strategy for engaging students in inquiry. We then worked with each collaboration group to create a new driving question to guide their research (see figure 2). Students posted their driving questions based on categories, and we displayed these questions for all to view. We found that writing these driving questions helped students focus their research into a more manageable piece of learning. Achieving this focus was not only a benefit to the learners, but also to Kat and me when guiding students as they accessed, assessed, and managed resources.

Throughout the PBL process, the Discovery Den was a hub of learning as students used the space for research. However, they also recorded videos in the Studio PAW, collaborated on ideas in the Digital PAW, or rehearsed presentations in the Present PAW. In addition, Kat was able to view student learning in progress by visiting our classrooms during flex day activities. (Flex day is a time when students work with their collaborative groups on projects.) Because the team felt our school librarian was a valuable learning and teaching partner, Kat was able to co-monitor the entire learning process. Students began to see their school librarian as another teacher (as well as the school librarian) helping guide students through their learning. And from a classroom teacher’s standpoint, having another educator in the room was a gift! Collaborating with the school librarian allowed us to team up and help all students within the walls of the Discovery Den and classrooms, and continue to teach learners how to use resources beyond the walls of the school library and of the school as well.

Many school librarians enthusiastically want to collaborate with classroom teachers. Their position in the school is a powerful one; knowledge oozes from their fingertips. What you think may be a great learning idea for kids could explode into a fantastic learning opportunity for all if you collaborate with your school librarian. Innovative learning extends beyond the walls of the classroom, and our school librarians are instructional partners who will challenge our teaching skills and enhance learning for students—and us! All you have to do is ask! For educators at Horizon, use of the “Levels of Library Services and Instructional Partnerships” rubric in figure 1 better-defined our expectations for students and for instruction, and helped launch us into a continuous improvement model through which we are reflective on our own practices.

Kat Berg is the school librarian at Horizon Middle School in Bismarck, North Dakota. She has twenty-four years of teaching/library experience and a Master’s degree in Library Science from Saint Cloud State University.

Jenni Kramer has been teaching for twenty-one years in grades five through eight. She is currently teaching sixth-grade English at Horizon Middle School in Bismarck, North Dakota, and holds a Master’s degree in Education from the University of North Dakota.

Misti Werle is the library coordinator for Bismarck Public Schools. She has been in education for sixteen years and holds a Master’s degree in Library Science from Florida State University. She is a member of AASL.

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Co-Planning and Co-Implementing Assessment and Evaluation Strategies for Inquiry Learning

Judi Moreillon
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Assessment and evaluation are not optional for school librarians who want to be valued as full-fledged instructional partners. School librarians must document evidence of practice. Classroom teachers plan, implement, and assess student learning outcomes and then evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction. If school librarians are to be considered and serve as equal partners with classroom teachers and specialist colleagues, then comprehensive collaboration will include co-planning, co-implementation, co-assessment, and co-evaluation. Sharing the responsibility for assessment is a way for school librarians to be valued members on their schools’ academic teams. Developing assessment expertise through coteaching is a pathway to leadership for school librarians.

All assessment should be conducted with the goal of improving learning. Giving students timely, specific, actionable feedback during an in-progress learning experience is a way for coteachers to monitor students’ understanding and gauge the effectiveness of educators’ instruction. This can be particularly true for longer periods of deeper learning such as those associated with inquiry, project-based, and problem-based learning. Effective feedback educators provide students contains specific steps to take to reach the learning goals for the project. As Rick Stiggins and Jan Chappuis (2012) have noted, assessment should be for learning rather than of learning. Assessment must be a path to improvement for students and for educators.

Self-assessment is also a necessary activity for all learners—youth and adults alike. Students must be given opportunities to self-assess their progress if they are to become self-regulating independent learners. Educators must take time to monitor and reflect on the effectiveness of their instructional practices and the resources and tools offered to support learning outcomes. When classroom teachers and school librarians co-plan and coteach, their reflective practice is strengthened by having two (or more) perspectives on what is working or has worked well and what can be improved at the next opportunity. When students, classroom teachers, and school librarians provide each other with feedback, the chances for success increase exponentially.

Assessment is a critical aspect of instructional partnerships. AASL recently published two position statements and included them in AASL’s National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries (2018). “Definition of an Effective School Library Program” states that an effective program requires a certified school librarian who is an instructional leader and teacher. “Collaboration” is one of the definitions included in that position statement: “working with a member of the teaching team to plan, implement, and evaluate a specialized instructional plan” (AASL.

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Figure 1. Elementary Collaborative Planning Form.

From J. Moreillon, Coteaching Reading Comprehension Strategies in Elementary School Libraries (Chicago: ALA 2013). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution—Noncommercial—Share Alike 2.5 License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/.
Co-Planning for Assessment During Inquiry Learning

School librarians can apply, further develop, and share their expertise in assessing student learning throughout the inquiry process, and critical thinking as they guide inquiry learning that finds the sweet spot between required curriculum and standards-based outcomes and student engagement, motivation, and commitment. Giving students voice and choice starts with listening to how they connect with the learning topic, project, or problem presented. This search for relevance is an essential aspect of launching an inquiry unit.

When planning assessments to monitor student understanding and attainment of target outcomes, educators plan with the end in mind. When considering what they should measure, many educators turn to the tenets of Understanding by Design, or UbD. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005) provided a straight-forward response to the "what" assessment question: What do we want students to know and be able to do as a result of learning? During the planning process, coteachers set goals, or learning objectives, for students. They conduct a task analysis to determine what specific knowledge, competencies, skills, and dispositions students need to gain in order to reach the lesson or unit objectives.
To increase learning for students, collaborating educators must also focus on “how” as they determine the best ways to collect, analyze, and use outcomes data in all 4Cs.

Educators use formative and summative assessments to determine the quality of student learning during the inquiry process. Formative assessments provide educators with feedback on students’ understanding while inquiry is in progress. Students use the timely, actionable feedback on formative assessments to modify their performance and stay on track to meet the learning objectives. Educators use formative assessments to modify their instruction to meet students’ needs for more information or practice. These assessment tools help educators and students improve while interventions can improve learning outcomes. Summative assessments administered at the end of a learning event are often evaluative. These assessments are related directed to the overarching learning objective(s) for the inquiry and are often represented by project scores and grades.

Figures 1 and 2 are sample classroom-library collaborative planning forms. Both forms include coteachers’ standards-based learning objectives for students, and educators’ initial ideas about the evaluation or summative criteria and tools educators will use to measure students’ attainment of those objectives. However, based on their task analysis during the planning process, educators will want to consider additional assessments. Journaling, exit slips, graphic organizers, rubrics, and more can be used throughout the inquiry unit to monitor students’ progress during the process. And as with the content of all learning plans, assessment tools may change or need to be revised based on what educators discover along the way.

**Collecting Formative Assessment Data**

Coteaching can increase the reliability of assessments. Educator observation can be strengthened when two or more coteaching educators are guiding and monitoring students’ inquiry. It is certainly more difficult for one educator to monitor an entire classroom of students through observation than it is for two or more. Collaborating educators can share their observations with one another in real time during teaching and learning events as well as debrief after them. Shared observations can be more comprehensive and reliable than the efforts of a single educator.

While there are many indirect ways to document evidence, evidence of practice places a “higher premium on direct measures of student learning” (Todd 2007, 71). During the inquiry process, formative assessments are used to collect data regarding students’ development of various subskills and dispositions. These assessment tools can simultaneously chart student progress on the overarching learning objectives as well as on the necessary skills that support students in achieving those targets.

Figure 3 shows such an example. After coteaching lessons on distinguishing between primary and
secondary sources, educators may teach or reteach the subskills of notemaking and keeping a running record of the works students consult during an inquiry process. Students could use this rubric to self-assess their progress, and educators could co-assess students’ ability to determine source types as well as attainment of these subskills. Students can use the comment section to ask questions. Educators can use it to provide specific steps for improvement.

When educators co-analyze formative assessment data they look for individual student’s misunderstandings or lower performance as well as for patterns among students in the class or course. One or both educators may work one-on-one with individual students or small groups of students whose formative assessments suggest reteaching may be helpful to them. Coteachers may also find that reteaching, providing additional examples, or reframing the target objective or subskills should involve the entire class. Having two or more professionals to collectively review formative assessments increases the validity of educators’ analyses and results in more consistent and effective feedback for students.

Collecting and Analyzing Summative Assessments

In inquiry learning, students and educators use summative assessments to evaluate students’ final products, presentations, and their overall performance in terms of the standards-based learning objectives. If educators and students have benefited from formative assessments, then summative measures will show positive improvements as a result of educators’ interventions. Summative assessments should be designed to measure achievement in terms of the knowledge, competencies, skills, and dispositions students developed as they reached for the target objectives. Summative assessments include tests, final product and presentation rubrics, reflective writing, and other tools that measure the sum total of the student outcomes for the learning event.

Effective summative assessment tools should help guide student learning throughout the inquiry process. These assessments should be distributed to students or co-created with students near the beginning of the inquiry process, and should be on hand for students and educators to refer to throughout the process. When students and educators regularly revisit the target learning objectives for inquiry, they are more likely to stay on course or get back on track to meet the expected outcomes.

Deeper learning experiences may require one or more summative assessments. Single summative assessments that touch all the bases may be useful as reminders of the various components of a creative final product that effectively demonstrates students’ new knowledge. Educators may provide multiple summative assessments for various aspects of the inquiry unit. Some assessments may focus on subskills and dispositions while others may hone a focus on content knowledge and competencies.
The Group Work and Multimedia Project Rubric (see figure 4) was designed to measure multiple aspects of students’ final group projects. It guides students in targeting audiences and provides tips for successful collaborative planning. It measures students’ use of evidence from their background knowledge and research to support the inferences they will make in their presentations. It asks students to use media ethically and to consider how their final products appeal to the audiences’ senses for the purpose of persuading them of the correctness of learners’ inferences.

The majority of this rubric could be completed by student groups self-assessing as a team. However, the rubric includes an individual reflection component. This component is designed to help individual students self-assess their practice and development of dispositions, a frequently missed opportunity for students and educators. Educators can suggest effective prompts to guide students as they reflect. These reflective pieces are powerful metacognitive tools for students that help them learn about themselves as learners. Students’ reflections also give educators a window into students’ thoughts and feelings that may not otherwise be known. (Ideally, educators will guide students to notice how they are applying dispositions throughout the inquiry unit and involve them in self-assessment throughout the process—not just at the end of the unit.)

**Co-Evaluating a Cotaught Inquiry Unit**

Just as co-assessing formative assessments helps educators provide improved instructional support for students, so does co-assessing summative assessments. Educators may work together to assess anchor examples that demonstrate various levels of achievement. They may continue to assess student work as a team, or they may assess work individually and come back together to compare their findings. One or both educators may also provide written comments that can guide students’ performance during future learning experiences. With final assessments in hand, educators will once again look at individual achievement as well as patterns of achievement among students or groups of students.

Debriefing with one another after the completion of an inquiry unit is essential collaborative work. Below are possible questions coteachers may ask themselves and each other as they evaluate the success of a unit and specify areas for improvement. This type of shared evaluation requires a high level of trust between school librarians and classroom teachers, and it deepens their commitment to continuous improvement.

1. Describe the student outcomes in terms of data source(s).
2. What worked especially well in the unit?
3. What could be improved next time?
4. Were the resources lacking, adequate, or supportive of the learning goals? Explain. (See Collection Map in figure 5.)
5. Were the technology tools used effective? Explain. 
(Moreillon 2012)

School librarians who co-plan, coteach, and co-assess student learning outcomes and the instruction itself also gather evidence of the relative strength or weakness of school library resources and tools. A collection map for an inquiry unit such as the one shown in figure 5 can be an excellent way for school librarians to evaluate and improve the library’s resources. It can also be a powerful advocacy tool. Sharing these data with decision-makers may make a case for increasing the library’s materials budget.

Assessment and Leadership

Co-assessing student learning is job-embedded professional development for school librarians and their colleagues (Moreillon 2018). By collaborating with classroom teachers and specialists at all grade levels and in all content areas, school librarians can receive and give a master class in effective assessment strategies. They can learn from the assessment expertise of content experts (classroom teachers and specialists) in all disciplines and note similarities and differences between specific coteachers’ assessment strategies. They can co-develop assessment tools that can be used by other educators in multiple content areas, such as rubrics for assessing notemaking, graphic organizers for document-ing the ethical use of resources and media, or questions that can be used to monitor the growth and development of dispositions. By engaging with others in designing and administering assessment tools, school librarians are perfectly positioned to develop their own level of expertise in assessing student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of instruction. They can also influence assessment practices throughout the school building and beyond through school librarian networks.

"Research shows that less teaching plus more feedback is the key to achieving greater learning" (Wiggins 2012, 16). When assessment is used for learning, school librarians can be recognized instructional partners and leaders in helping students, classroom teachers, administrators, and schools reach their targets for improvement. School librarian leadership in improving student learning and achievement and improving educator proficiency will help all library stakeholders reach for their capacity to learn, teach, and use data for instructional improvement. Helping others reach their capacity is what effective leaders do.

Judi Moreillon is a literacy and libraries consultant and a Lilead Project mentor. A former school librarian and retired school librarian educator, she is the author of four professional books published by ALA, three of which focused on classroom–library coteaching reading comprehension strategies. Judi’s most recent book is Maximizing School Librarian Leadership: Building Connections for Learning and Advocacy (ALA 2018). Among other publications, she contributed the literacy chapter in The Many Faces of School Library Leadership (Libraries Unlimited 2017). A twenty-eight-year ALA/AASL member, she blogs at SchoolLibrarianLeadership.com, tweets @CactusWoman, and administers the Maximizing School Librarian Leadership Facebook Group.

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New District, New School Year, New Standards

Starting at the Beginning

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Assessment and evaluation are sometimes difficult things to discuss, and we often think of them as once-and-done end results. However, assessing where you are in the learning process should be an ongoing activity, and formative assessments can provide valuable information about what the next (or first) steps should be to approach a learning target. The same is true for assessing the school library. Let me share what I have done to assess my libraries, using the new National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries. I know that implementing the standards can feel overwhelming. Therefore, I am writing to share my process so that readers can see a way to engage with the standards. So, let’s start at the very beginning...

At the beginning of this school year, I started a new position as the district librarian in my town. I had been working in a different district for the past six years, so there is certainly an adjustment to “coming home.” Some teachers know me from my previous time working as a building-level school librarian in this district, but all of the administrators are new, save one. So, it is very much a chance to start over. What better time to do that than the beginning of the school year?

I shared the checklist in [chapter 14] with my district-level supervisor and set about the task of figuring out how to assess the school libraries in the district from both the perspective of individual libraries and the district as a whole.

And with our new school library standards, too! So, yes, I began the year with some excitement.

As I write this in September, I know there will certainly be challenges. In this district, I am the only certified school librarian for seven schools: one high school, one middle school, three “in-town” elementary schools, and two rural schools of twenty-one and eleven students, respectively. Each of the “town” schools has a dedicated library paraprofessional. The larger of the rural schools has a part-time paraprofessional whose tasks include some library duties, and the smaller rural school has no library paraprofessional. The paraprofessionals provide the day-to-day services in the school library such as check-out, homework and technology help, readers’ advisory services, and resource assistance. At the elementary schools, they also teach the regularly scheduled library “special.”

My predecessor and I have been meeting for the past year as a small informal professional learning community. Therefore, I came to this position knowing some of the celebrations and challenges of the school libraries in the system. I decided the best way to start the new school year, especially since I am technically new to the district, is to work on a formal assessment of the various libraries and their services. Assessment should always be based upon some sort of guide, so I am glad to have the National School Library Standards.

Assessing Where We Are

Preparation and Process

Right before coming into work for the first time, I reread chapter 14 in the AASL Standards book: “Evaluating School Libraries.” I shared the checklist in this chapter with my district-level supervisor and
set about the task of figuring out how to assess the school libraries in the district from both the perspective of individual libraries and the district as a whole. Disclaimer: At the time of this writing in September, I have not yet completed the task. The plethora of “beginning of the year” tasks required for each school has been more distracting than I expected. Trying to gather data on seven individual schools can sometimes feel daunting as well. However, having the standards as a guide has certainly helped keep me focused.

As I mentioned, the first thing that I did was share the checklist with my district-level administrator and explain that I wanted to start the year by doing a formative assessment of the school libraries and the district program by using the National School Library Standards and the checklist in our book. He agreed that this would be a useful place to begin. I then typed the checklist into a spreadsheet to record evidence from each school, instead of just “checking the box.”

When preparing to assess a school library, gathering some data and evidence before beginning is helpful. I recommend:

- running collection analysis reports;
- gathering copies of all written policies and procedures (both building and district-level);
- finding any lesson plans, schedules, and collaboration logs that may still be around from previous years;
- seeking out minutes or notes from library advisory committees; and
- jotting down a list of any questions that may need to be asked of other people.

It also may be good to pull together any pictures that have been taken of displays or student work or lessons, especially if a formal written report to a supervisor is part of the process, which it will be in my case.

Because I am not at each library every day, and I know my predecessor wasn’t either, I decided that the best way to gather this evidence was to survey the paraprofessionals at each building, asking them questions as if they were the certified librarian (as they are, for all intents and purposes, acting in the role of school librarian for their building). So, I developed a Google Form Survey with a section for each of the Shared Foundations, and questions that could help me understand how each Shared Foundation manifests at each school. I based the questions on the evaluation checklist. I will compare the answers to the AASL Standards’ School Library Alignments as part of my formal report. Also, I have been spending the first few weeks of school rotating between all the buildings and observing the library layouts and how the paraprofessionals interact with the students and teachers.

Even though I have not yet completed this assessment, I believe the work is important and good. To make this process more “bite-sized,” a librarian could choose just one of the Shared Foundations and assess based on it as a starting point. Because I wanted to gather data on the programs that exist now so that I can work toward building a cohesive district-wide department, I have tackled all six at once!

Focuses of the Assessment

Let’s take a look now at each of the Shared Foundations, focusing on the building-level evaluation items in the checklist. (I am waiting to apply the district-level items after gathering and analyzing the building-level data.) The “School Library Evaluation Checklist” (AASL 2018, 174–80) includes four or five checklist items for each of the Shared Foundations at the building level.

**Inquire.** According to the checklist, the successful school librarian collaborates with teachers, systematically teaches research processes, participates in curriculum development and implementation, and ensures school library access for all users. Evidence to prove this can include lesson plans, collaboration logs, policies to show access to facilities, and membership in various building leadership committees. For this Shared Foundation, I asked survey questions about collaborative activities, the research process, and on which committees the paraprofessionals may have been included.

**Include.** This Shared Foundation, with its focus on intellectual freedom and diverse points of view, inviting and safe learning environments, accessible resources and spaces, and appropriate evaluation of personnel, was easier to assess. Evidence can be gathered through observation, collection analysis reports, and information on staffing and supervisory assignments, including formal evaluative documents and hours of operation. Survey questions for this foundation focused on hours of operation, library rules, display updates, and how personnel evaluations are handled.
Collaborate. Collaborative planning of lessons, supporting collaboration among students, encouraging input in policies, and participation in decision-making teams show up again in this Shared Foundation. Therefore, many of the same pieces of evidence gathered for Inquire could also be used for evaluating the school library in this category. So, again, I am looking for lesson plans and collaboration in the Inquiry section of my survey, here I asked about who has made the decisions about library policies and procedures, what working with small student groups looks like, and for the respondent to share a successful group library project.

Curate. This particular Shared Foundation was an interesting one to evaluate because of some local variations. To begin, I ran collection analysis reports for each school collection. I included only one survey question, which was a "Check All That Apply" question to find out how involved the paraprofessionals have been in the management of the individual library collections, as I seek information about their role in ordering and weeding. I am currently working with our school board to rewrite the library selection, weeding, and reconsideration policies, so there may be some changes in the procedures surrounding this Shared Foundation.

Explore. Leading learners in exploration means the school library should be a place where learning can be participatory and active, with a variety of instructional methods in use, inclusion of technology, and lessons that supplement other resources and connect to the outside world. I observed the library layouts at each school and searched for things like makerspace areas, space for group work, and displays. In the survey, I asked questions about instructional practices and activities.

Engage. Engaging learners is certainly more than just keeping them occupied and interested. They must learn to interact with the world of information in a positive, ethical, and respectful manner. This includes showing an understanding of copyright, privacy, intellectual property, ethical online behavior, intellectual freedom, new technologies, and responsible use of technology and social media. For evaluating our inclusion of this Shared Foundation, I looked for posters, displays, lesson plans, policies, and answers to survey questions regarding instruction in copyright, how the paraprofessionals keep up to date with current educational and library-related practices, how the various libraries promote intellectual freedom, and how information is shared with teachers.

Looking Ahead

Although the details of my library evaluations go beyond the scope of this article—and, as I write this in September, are not really complete enough to be published—I have already noticed things that might have taken me longer to discover without the focus of a formal assessment process based on the Shared Foundations. For instance, we do not have a systematic research process being taught, with many of the research skills being taught by individual teachers in classrooms. However, we do have makerspace activities and centers being employed in each of the elementary schools. Most importantly, all of the paraprofessionals that I have the privilege to work with are very interested in improving their practice to include what is best for our students and believe that the school libraries should be vibrant, engaging places that enhance the learning of our students. And this shared focus on students’ learning is, in my opinion, the very best place to start our journey together.

Work Cited:


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Mary Moser

WEST VIRGINIA

Mary Aldridge
Angela Phillips
Kaitlyn Jo Woolwine

WISCONSIN

Kerra Allen
Joycelyn Andacht-Jones
Melanie Ann Barsness
Deilah Beal
Abby D. Beyerl
Linda Sue Brown
Jone Davis
Joan E. Evans
Anne Cleary Hamland
Deborah Ann Hayden
Melissa Hill
Jennifer A. Pavlik
Ulysses Mattison
Cora Yenser

WYOMING

Brenna Lin Franklin
Allison Gillen
Leslie Frances McPherson

ARMED FORCES EUROPE/PACIFIC

M.A. Buckner
Shannon Craycraft
Cinnamon Cripe
Diana R. Lanelotte
Christina Leon
Maureen J. Shea

CANADA

Jonine Bergen
Nancie Bolduc
Darby MacNab

MEXICO

Susa Lazarin

INTERNATIONAL

Heidi Adel Assaad
Tzuten Maggie Chen
Lina Mustapha Choucairi
Kathryn E. Concannon
Stephanie Diana Creamer
Sana Daher
Maura Kennedy DiSalvo
Kathleen Laughlin Gorringe
Rose Lai
Macy Mei Sze Lau
Maria Fernanda Lopez
Terry Maguire
Margaret Kristin Merga
Fiona Mulvaney
Marion Whisnant
Reading widely gives me an overview and a lexicon of rich and inspiring content language. Fiction and memoir add to my emotional connection, and I never know which book or article will spark an idea or new direction. That’s the fun of research!

When I visit schools I often share the first poem I ever wrote in Mrs. Brownworth’s fourth-grade class:

The grass is green,
The grass is brown,
The grass is waving up and down.

The grass is brown,
The grass is green,
Under the grass are many things you’ve never even seen!

I fell under poetry’s spell in fourth grade, but I’d been this kid since the age of three: the one looking under logs, peering into pond water, and sifting through salty tidal sands. I’m still that eager, hands-on learner, as well as the (not quite so young) writer who loves the language, ideas, music, and moment of a poem.

Each science poetry collection I envision begins with an immersive field experience and a wide, general-interest dive into the library. For my upcoming collection *Superlative Birds* (Peachtree, March 1, 2019) I visited the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, where I met ornithologists and amazing birders, and experienced birding using all of my senses. When I meet field scientists, their excitement always enriches my connection to their subject. Fun tip: Many field scientists are happy to share their work with students of all ages! During my experiential adventures I create a field journal to record my scientific and sensory observations, sketches, and informational notes.

I began my *Superlative Birds* library research reading general-interest books about birds, bird behavior, and avian ecology. I read both narrative and expository nonfiction. I also read bird-centered fiction and memoir. Reading widely gives me an overview and a lexicon of rich and inspiring content language. Fiction and memoir add to my emotional connection, and I never know which book or article will spark an idea or new direction. That’s the fun of research! And that’s also why I so appreciate access to library collections with a wide variety of approaches to a particular topic.

As I zeroed in on my approach to *Superlative Birds* (avian world record-holders such as the tiniest, the loudest, and the smelliest birds) my library research became more focused. I studied specific attributes such as eggs, beaks, and nests, each selected to tell a piece of the story of “bird-ness.” I also read books and articles highlighting animal “record-holders.” I continued to
hone my hands-on birding skills as I wrote my poems and science notes—have binoculars, will spy! This hands-on exploration has also helped deepen my understanding of bird behavior and ecology. Interested in birds since the ninth grade (an anecdote I share in the book’s back matter), this book has made me into an avid, citizen-scientist birder who now participates in Audubon bird counts and sends observations to Cornell’s eBird database.

Last spring, I was fortunate to collaborate with school librarian Jenny Lussier and elementary educator Amy Sorensen at John Lyman Elementary School in Connecticut to introduce Amy’s grade 3/4 class to the process of using field experience and science journaling to create science poetry. Full-circling back to my fourth-grade poem about critters under the grass, we based our two-day program on the “Investigations” section of Leaf Litter Critters (Peachtree 2018). Before the program Jenny and I gathered equipment with the help of the district’s elementary science specialist, Susan Michael.

We began day 1 in the school library, where we discussed safe field sampling, science journaling (writing and sketching), and informational and sensory observations. Having read Leaf Litter Critters, Amy’s students predicted what we might find in our duff samples. Outside, working in twos and threes, students chose sites and collected samples in recycled plastic containers. Then we sat at picnic tables to sketch, listen, look, and make observations in our simple journals (see figure 1 for an example from one of my own science journals). I so enjoyed seeing students engrossed in multisensory observation—each connecting with something different in the environment around them. Back in our collaborative “lab” in the school library, students took a closer look at their samples with magnifiers and continued their journal observations.

During our day 2 meeting on the rug in Amy’s classroom, I shared some examples of nature poetry, encouraging student observations of different aspects of poetry, including rich use of language, rhyme, emotion, and fun and powerful words. Then students shared their observational writing from their journals, brainstorming how they might build on their own language and observations in a poem. We moved to tables for independent writing.

In feedback to me, Amy wrote, “I think the fact that [the students] were able to get out into the field and collect their own samples was key to hooking them in. Many kids were amazed at the discoveries made in just a scoop or two of the earth! Even my most reluctant writers were inspired to take notes and create poetry in their ‘field journals.’” Amy also suggested a simple and terrific gross-motor improvement to use during the day 2 classroom brainstorming session: “stand up and tell a friend what you noticed…” Jenny wrote, “I would have loved to add a research part to follow your workshop.” That would be an enriching extension, mirroring my own poetry process.

Jenny observed that our collaborative, cross-curricular programming correlated with several of the Key Commitments for Shared Foundations in the AASL Standards Framework for Learners, including:

Figure 1. Science journaling example.
Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Include: Demonstrate an Understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community.

Collaborate: Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.

Curate: Make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance.

Explore: Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection. (AASL 2018, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38)

I was thrilled to collaborate with these two exemplary educators to develop a program that can introduce students at any grade level to (in the words of teacher, Amy Sorensen) “…a wonderful balance of down and dirty science exploration and solid literacy work” that for me is the joy of creating science poetry!

Leslie Bulion has been writing poetry since the fourth grade and has been an observer of the natural world from the moment she could peer under a rock. Her award-winning science poetry includes Leaf Litter Critters, At the Sea Floor Café: Odd Ocean Critter Poems, Random Body Parts: Gross Anatomy Riddles in Verse (all published by Peachtree), and Hey There, Stink Bug (published by Charlesbridge), with more collections on the way! Leslie’s graduate background in oceanography and work as a school social worker informs her science poetry as well as her science-infused middle-grade novels Uncharted Waters, The Trouble with Rules, and The Universe of Fair (all published by Peachtree). Her books have been honored by Bank Street College, National Council of Teachers of English, National Science Teachers Association, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Parents’ Choice Foundation, and selected for state reading lists. Her first book, Fatuma’s New Cloth (published by Moon Mountain), was awarded the 2003 Children’s Africana Book Award by the African Studies Association.

When Leslie isn’t traveling for research, scuba diving, visiting schools, or speaking at conferences, she works, explores, and lives in Connecticut with her husband, Rubin Hirsch.

Work Cited: