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I’ve been thinking about this *Knowledge Quest* issue for a couple of weeks, wondering what I might have to add to the conversation. Coteaching is a topic dear to me. It is the lifeblood of how our school library program works. I can’t imagine my program or my job without. But I know that co-editors Susan Ballard and Judi Moreillon have searched across the country trying to find the best of the best to share their experiences with you. So, I wasn’t sure there was much I could add to the conversation.

As I was pondering, I thought back to the countless articles I’ve read about coteaching and collaboration. They haven’t all been positive. Some folks think that perhaps we rely too much on relationships with classroom curriculums and teachers. Some school librarians think that if we focused on our own curriculums and instruction, our positions and school library programs would be more secure. But, in this economic and political climate, I’m not sure that would be the case.

Instead, I think that collaboration and coteaching must expand. They can’t just be school library things. As we think about all the issues facing educators and about the process of redefining what teaching and learning look like in our schools, we can see that the classroom teachers who go into their rooms and shut the doors are setting themselves up for failure. Sure, probably some good teaching is going to happen in the isolation of these classrooms, but what are these teachers—and their students—losing by being isolated? Our access to the world is growing and expanding by leaps and bounds every day. Educators—including school librarians—have to take advantage of these new opportunities.

A school librarian who goes into the library and shuts the door is going to be in the same boat as the isolated teachers. Students need learning that connects and builds on their prior knowledge in many content areas and contexts. The entire school building should be full of collaborative conversations among teachers—including school librarians—about what they are doing and how they can help one another help students build on their prior knowledge and connect to new ideas and information.

As we think about the actions that underlie AASL’s standards (think, create, share, and grow) and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills 4Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation), we focus heavily on how to help students gain and use these skills. But our focus can’t just be on redesigning instruction for students; we must also rethink how our schools operate. These fundamental skills, actions, and dispositions should become not only what we teach, but reflect how we work together in our schools, too.
Collaboration is all about thinking and critical thinking because by combining talents and knowledge, the opportunities for a stronger and more effective product are increased. Over the years, I can’t tell you the number of new teaching strategies, new thought processes, and new ideas that have come to me because of the conversations before, during, or after a collaborative venture with a classroom teacher. I have learned so much from collaborative experiences; as a result, not only am I a better librarian, but I’m also able to think in new directions. I hope that working with me does the same for the teachers in my school. Exposure to another perspective or outlook can lead to strong, thought-provoking discussions, ideas, and activities. The same things we want our students to do during their activities and lessons begin with the thinking educators do to plan those educational experiences.

I can always tell when I am working with a master teacher because those classes always seem to go the best—the teacher is so engaged in what we are doing that we really are working together. The teacher can connect what I’m saying or doing to what is happening in the classroom. This instruction forms the links that are so important for learners as they forge the connections between their new and old knowledge.

I have a good friend who is a librarian and often refers to himself as the “idea man.” And I can assure you that he is always thinking of new ideas. Every conversation with him results in my thoughts swirling. His ideas are usually much more creative than mine. His mind can think way outside of the box. Just think what having a mind like his as part of your planning and teaching could do. The lessons and projects could be so engaging. Imagine the different things you could try! Combining his ideas with yours could make for some memorable lessons and experiences that students would not otherwise have the opportunity to try. Each of us comes to the table with our own unique background, experiences, and skills, so in collaboration we can take advantage of combining all of them to make school amazing.

Let’s go back to that closed-door classroom. We are all busy folks. We have a lot on our plates. Why would we not share what is working in our rooms (classrooms and school libraries) with others? Why would we not want to hear what is working in other learning spaces and make our own instruction even better? Or why not know that something was unsuccessful? Could this knowledge save us from trying the same thing and failing, too? These types of conversations are key to a successful school. By working together as educators, we can learn from each other—sharing both the good and the bad. How can I help you and you help me? Collaboration is all about teamwork.

A few weeks ago I again had the opportunity to be a part of our data meetings. We rearrange the schedule a bit and try to get two hours for each grade level (one meeting a day) to look at the data for every kid. We use data such as a student’s reading level, classroom performance, or any school/district assessment that has been completed. We do this about four times a year. As often as possible, I attend along with our resource staff, principal, and literacy specialist. We look at what intervention strategies are working, which strategies are not working, and what we need to change. These are powerful conversations, and we’re all sharing and offering ideas. Conversations like this are key to making our school even better, and the school librarian needs to be a part of them!

Professional Development Every Day

I wrote this down earlier, but it bears repeating. Collaboration is one of the best professional development opportunities I have had in my career. The strategies, the techniques, and the content I’ve picked up have made me a much better school librarian. The different perspectives and ways that others look at the same things can be so creative and inspiring.

So, as we think about collaboration and coteaching, we have to expand our definitions beyond just the school librarian and the classroom teacher, and include the entire school. We need to create a culture where collaboration is the foundation for how our schools work and operate. School librarians can help take a lead by modeling this behavior as they work with teachers. Amazing things will result, I have no doubt.

Carl A. Harvey II is the school librarian at North Elementary School in Noblesville, Indiana, and president of the American Association of School Librarians.
Leaders! What the school librarian profession needs now are leaders! One sure way to develop as leaders in our schools is through cultivating instructional partnerships. Through building relationships, discussing and developing curricula, and coteaching with our classroom teacher colleagues, we can blaze a trail that will put school librarians on the map as essential contributors to 21st-century learning and teaching and leadership. At the AASL Vision Summit in 2006 (a gathering of association thought-leaders who helped define the major themes for the revision of AASL’s standards and guidelines), instructional partnerships, one of the five roles defined by AASL in Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs, was identified as the number one key to the future health of the profession (AASL 2009, 16). Through the development of instructional partnerships, school librarians can increase the impact of our expertise as information specialists, teachers, and program administrators. In short, we can lead!

Improvements in literacy instruction to address the complex needs of students and teachers in the ever-changing 21st-century landscape cannot spread throughout a learning community unless educators work together. While learning with and from students is essential, educators can accelerate professional growth through the process of collaborating on instructional design and delivery, and teaching alongside other adults. We practice the best kind of professional development—job-embedded professional development—when we coteach actual students in real time, using the taught curriculum, available resources and tools, and within the supports and constraints of our particular learning environments.

Adult learning (and leading) in schools is best implemented at the point of practice. Our experiences as school librarians provide evidence that “leading from the middle” works. Consider the impact of school librarians who intentionally create a shared professional development space in the school library and, if available, within its accompanying computer labs, to offer colleagues an opportunity to model and practice lifelong learning in a nontargeting environment. Some have called this model the “Information Commons,” where student learning, curriculum, and professional development are focused in the physical and virtual space of the school library. We know this model is called “best practice.”

The organic nature of the classroom-library collaboration model offers onsite, job-embedded, professional development integrated at the point of need. Through shared responsibility, coteachers create opportunities for reciprocal mentoring and
ongoing mutual reflection to improve practice. The opportunity to learn alongside a colleague as an equal improves teaching practices for novice as well as veteran educators. And ultimately students benefit in a myriad of ways. Coteaching lowers student-to-teacher ratios at the point of instruction. More students have opportunities for individualized attention, and differentiation in both process and product is more effective. Two or more educators can monitor and adjust teaching, and assess students’ learning processes and products, as well as evaluate the lessons themselves.

School librarians’ effectiveness as educators may hinge on being considered a peer by classroom teacher colleagues and coequals with classroom teachers by administrators. Coteaching with colleagues is one way to demonstrate and document our contributions to the academic programs in our schools. Likewise, by providing in-service professional development opportunities for our colleagues not only do we help them, we provide one another with the means to help students too and provide evidence of the same. With the current emphasis on data and accountability, school librarians must meet the imperative to foster student achievement through effective instruction. Planning with teachers, coteaching, teaching information and communication technologies (ICT), and providing in-service training sessions to teachers are among the school library predictors of students’ academic achievement on standardized tests, particularly in reading and language arts (Achterman 2008, 62–65).

While school librarians must serve as full members of instructional teams, there is a need to do more. AASL describes school librarian “leaders” as educators who build relationships and partnerships, integrate 21st-century skills throughout the school environment, demonstrate professional commitment and knowledge, and take a global view through active participation in the local and global learning communities. Instructional partnerships are one pathway to achieving a leadership role in our schools; they are a way to positively impact student learning.

The school librarians, teachers, technology integrationists, specialists, library educators, and principals who share their coteaching stories in this issue of Knowledge Quest have reached out to receptive colleagues for collaborative experiences and have codeveloped engaging standards-based learning experiences for students, as well as job-embedded professional development for themselves. By initiating, nurturing, and sustaining a culture of collaboration in their schools, these professionals are creating the kinds of learning environments in which students can succeed.

In This Issue

High school librarian Jean Kilker from Maryvale High School in Phoenix, Arizona, involves classroom teacher colleagues and students in a myriad of school- and community-based literacy projects. With quotes from her colleagues, Jean tells how she developed the program from its infancy to maturity to have a greater impact on student learning.

Elementary school librarian Suzanna Panter and fourth-grade teacher Rebecca Kelley from Dumbarton Elementary School in Henrico County, Virginia, also made a significant impact on students. Suzanna and Rebecca gave students a fresh perspective by coteaching a study of American Indians that extended a history lesson to a present-day enriching experience. In their article, these colleagues recall the process of codeveloping and coteaching a unit that culminated with students meeting and learning with and from Chief Allston of the Nottoway tribe.

Both students and teachers recognize the benefits of coteaching, as demonstrated by the views expressed in an article by Stacy Cameron, district information specialist, and two of her colleagues in the Prosper (TX) Independent School District. Stacy, along with classroom teacher Adria Butcher and instructional technology coach Christine Haight, share their perspectives on the collaborative experience as they coplanned and coteach a lesson that allowed students to explore media-literacy topics in the context of an AP English lesson. This first-hand account also includes the perspectives of high school students involved in this collaborative project.

A school-wide climate of collaboration is described by elementary school librarian Lizzie Padgett and principal Kappy Steck, Forest Lake Elementary, Columbia, South Carolina. In their article they describe how their school learning community uses Collaborative Conferences (CCs) to ensure horizontal and vertical planning, integrated curriculum and technology tools, and positive student outcomes. Both Lizzie and Kappy share how the work of the school librarian is central to the success of the CCs.

What happens when a university professor, science teacher, and school librarian connect to integrate content, library research/literacy skills and technology? Collaboration beyond the walls of the school in a lesson that gives students a fresh perspective on application of science outside the classroom. In their article Jessica Payeur, science teacher, and Paula Chessin, school librarian at Londonderry (NH) Middle School, discuss a successful collaboration with coauthor Debby Chessin,
professor of curriculum and instruction, University of Mississippi, Oxford. Their collaborative, multi-disciplinary learning/teaching unit showcases student work, resources, and presentation of the activities for each step of a month-long project.

To give us a look at a collaborative project that allows students to apply their new knowledge to their own lives, the librarians at New Canaan (CT) High School, Christina Russo and Michelle Luhtala, describe a data-driven unit of health instruction, which they coplanned and cotought with Donna Sapienza, health and career technology education teacher. The collaborating team shares how they designed the unit (delivered through blended online and face-to-face instruction) and documented student learning outcomes while empowering students to take charge of their own personal wellness.

To provide insights into collaboration in professional development, Judith Kaplan, coordinator of the School Library Media Studies Sequence at the University of Vermont, and Susan Ballard, co-guest editor, invite us along as they relate the learning voyage undertaken in the development and delivery of a postgraduate course that they cotought in fall 2010. They structured the course as a community of practice to build relationships and examine recent changes in librarianship.

Through collaborative planning, codeveloping lessons and interventions, and scoring and analyzing student outcomes, teachers and school librarians can make a positive impact on both student learning and educator proficiency. Along with two risk-taking science teachers Angela Norton and Wes Dunbar, school librarian Gloria Voutos shares how, under the instructional leadership of principal Shane Conklin, educators are developing a culture of collaboration at Tidwell Middle School in Roanoke, Texas, and benefitting students while providing opportunities for on-the-job professional development for staff.

Need to convince colleagues that coteaching is effective? Read Kerry Pierce Conklin’s article. Kerry, a recent graduate of Rutgers, examines some of the latest research related to coteaching, what the results mean for school librarians and their teacher partners, and how the research and results can be used to improve instructional design and delivery to students. She also shares key elements for use in a school–librarian-led professional development workshop to introduce teachers to the concept.

Michelle Wilson, school librarian at North Highland Elementary School in the Jefferson County (AL) School System, worked with classroom teacher colleague Yvonne Hare to coteach a highly successful third-grade learning adventure on pioneer history. Overcoming time constraints and personal family–life challenges, Michelle and Yvonne taught an engaging—and fun—unit that not only helped students appreciate and reflect on the pioneer experience, but also allowed these third-graders to develop presentation skills and get feedback from another third-grade class.

Fun, reflection, and developing media literacy skills while pursuing independent study of a self-selected new activity (such as learning American Sign Language or making cheese) were all made possible for seventh-grade students, thanks to McNair Middle School librarian Sarah Thompson, and Vanessa Seward, teacher of gifted and talented students in Fayetteville, Arkansas. These authors share how they developed a collaborative relationship and worked together to improve the independent study experience. Every year that they coplan and coteach this unit, Sarah and Vanessa find that the students’ enthusiasm for the project and their learning outcomes grow stronger.

In her Learning4Life (L4L) column, Karen Gavigan passes along tips and information about resources to help school librarians convince their colleagues to coteach the AASL standards and improve learning outcomes for students. In the process, school librarians can position themselves as curriculum leaders.

And speaking of positioning ourselves as leaders while helping our students, Judi Moreillon, co-guest editor, and Cassandra Barnett, school librarian at Fayetteville (AR) High School, have joined forces to promote the slogan You Belong @ Your Library! in an exclusive online feature at <www.ala.org/aasl/knowledgequest>. In words (Judi’s) and photos (gathered by Cassandra) they answer the question: What can you do to make sure everyone in your school community celebrates School Library Month?

We hope that Knowledge Quest readers will “see” themselves in the articles in this issue. As you read, notice that the educators who share their coteaching experiences focus their work on student outcomes AND have fun doing it! Leadership is about “social influence.
enlisting the engagement and support of others in achieving a common task” (Haycock 2010, 11), so exert your social influence, enlist the engagement and support of your colleagues, and lead the way through collaboration and coteaching. It’s worth it.

Works Cited:


Judi Moreillon is an assistant professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman’s University, author of Coteaching Reading Comprehension Strategies in Secondary School Libraries: Maximizing Your Impact (ALA Editions 2012) and Collaborative Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension: Maximizing Your Impact (ALA Editions 2007). She served as the chair of the AASL School Librarian’s Role in Reading Task Force. Her website is <http://storytrail.com>.

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Visit Knowledge Quest Online at <www.ala.org/aasl/knowledgequest> to listen to a podcast of Judi and Susan discussing this issue on Coteaching! Judi and Susan will also present a webinar on coteaching, April 10 at 7:00 PM CST. Visit www.ala.org/aasl/kqwebinars to register.
BOOM TOWN

A WILD WEST ADVENTURE IN COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND COTEACHING
Collaboration is one of the most important aspects of the role of the school librarian in the twenty-first century, but, for many reasons, collaboration is challenging to implement. Some classroom teachers may not know how students benefit from the classroom-school library collaboration. Others may be unwilling to relinquish control of their students, their classrooms, and their schedules. School librarians may not feel that they have enough knowledge regarding the content area to be covered, especially as compared to the classroom teacher’s expertise. Both participants are charged with balancing out any potential personality differences, teaching philosophies, and preferences in instructional resources or strategies. For coteaching to have a positive impact on student learning, educators must rise above all of these potential barriers to develop effective collaborative teaching.

Fortunately, third-grade classroom teacher Yvonne Hare and I had none of these obstacles to overcome. With a rich history of five years’ worth of instructional partnerships on every level of the collaborative continuum, Mrs. Hare and I have learned over time how to harmonize our instruction. I have learned when and how to sit back and learn from her along with the students, and when to take the lead in those areas for which I am the expert. We liken our collaborative partnership to the ever-changing dials on a musical equalizer device. Sometimes one dial increases as the other decreases, but always in perfect complement to one another. Still, even building on our successful past coteaching, our design and implementation of our “Boom Town” unit was not without its own trials. Our primary enemy was the calendar, and when time constraints were combined with unexpected illnesses, a startling death in the extended community, and even surgery for our own children, we experienced a tumultuous month. Still, we persevered, we tweaked, we finagled, and finally we guided students in completing this unit. Mrs. Hare and I said many times that with all our scheduling woes during the teaching of this project, if we could reach the finish line on this collaborative effort, then anyone can be successful coteaching!

Planning and Coteaching the Unit

For the unit topic we selected the pioneers and the subsequent development of “boom towns” that occurred in the West during the California Gold Rush of the 1850s. This topic matched the title
of a reading selection from the third-grade social studies textbook and, along with information literacy standards, drew in a rich variety of Alabama Course of Study Standards for social studies. Those objectives included studying the migratory pattern of historical population changes, and exploring the difference between goods and services, and matched our Boom Town unit perfectly.

Mrs. Hare and I met multiple times to discuss and plan the unit, but again, due to time constraints within the school day, we accomplished most of our collaborative planning through the use of e-mail. It was not unusual for me to receive an e-mail from her at 4:30 a.m. filled with thoughts about our unit! We decided from the onset to use the backward method of instructional design. We discussed the overall goals and objectives for the students to accomplish, then we discussed the final products and assessment methods we felt were best. Finally, we planned our activities and strategies. Adjustments were made until we were both satisfied with our plan. Together we set deliverable dates for goals, and we were off into the land of the pioneers!

We launched this unit by providing explicit instruction on the difference between goods and services. Mrs. Hare took the lead in this area, and so most of this instruction occurred in her classroom. The students had already completed the “Boom Town” selection in their textbook, so this instruction and reading provided a helpful frame of reference when we explained to them that we were going to consider goods or services we wanted to offer in the new pioneer town.

At this point, the children were hooked. We continued to discuss the difference between goods and services, and then each student chose one good or service he or she wanted to sell or offer in the new Boom Town. We were impressed with the creativity of the students. Among their selections were soap, picks, pans for gold panning, wagon tools, banks, and even pioneer fashion stores. Then we presented students with their poster-planning tool, which was a simple document I created for their use as a graphic organizer. Each student recorded the chosen good or service, poster title, three reasons a pioneer would want to purchase this good or service, and a list of items for which clip art was needed.

The students spent three weeks working on the graphic organizer, and at various points Yvonne Hare and I would give examples and provide instruction on choosing elements for the posters. Through development of the poster product, the students also accomplished the objective of practicing persuasive writing techniques, which carried over into their presentations at the completion of the unit.

Integrating Technology Tools into the Unit

Once students finished the poster-planning tool, we moved on to transcribing it into a word processor document. I led the instruction for the creation of the poster, a process that was intentionally scaffolded to ensure student success. I demonstrated to the students how to insert their titles as word art, how to adjust their text, and how to insert clip art. Next, the students “coached” me through executing these features, then a brave volunteer demonstrated these tools for the class, and finally the students were provided time for independent practice. As they worked on their individual posters, Mrs. Hare and I circulated among the students, providing assistance and redirection as needed. They were so eager to use these simple features they nearly sucked all the air out of the room with their excitement! Their reaction demonstrated to me that even though most of our lessons with technology involve fancy, advanced Web 2.0 applications, students of all ages in our school would enjoy experimenting with these simple features of Microsoft Word that allow students creative expression.

Throughout the project the students used our class blog dedicated to Boom Town <kidblog.org/boomtownorbust>. The blog provided an outlet for students to think deeply and respond
to various questions about the pioneers’ journey westward. On our school library wiki <heskids.wikispaces.com>, I also provided links to resources about pioneer life for students to use as references if they wanted to learn more before responding to a post. The prompts on the blog included:

- Do you think that the pioneers would have kept pets? What animals would make a great pet to a pioneer?

- What kinds of clothing did the pioneers wear? Identify one item of clothing a pioneer would need and explain why that piece of clothing would be important for them.

- You have discussed and researched quite a bit about pioneers and their journey west. Sometimes the best way to understand history is to imagine that we were there. Imagine that you were a pioneer in the 1850s. What did you SEE on your journey west? What did you HEAR on your journey west? Let’s use some of our sensory words to show what it would have been like to journey westward in the 1800s.

- Imagine that you are living in the 1850s, when many people were deciding to go west. You know a lot of people who want to stay in the East where it is safe, but you also know a lot of people who want to go west as well. What is your decision? Will you go or stay? Why?

- Many pioneers struggled with the decision over whether to go west or stay home. The journey was long, hard, and dangerous, and there were no guarantees that they would actually make it. Why do you think they decided to go west?

Presenting Their Learning and Reflecting on Our Practice

After students completed their posters, each student used a document camera and classroom interactive whiteboard to present a “sales pitch” to another class of third-graders, who served as our judges. We spoke to the children about how companies have to purchase advertisement time on the TV or radio, and gave each student only forty-five seconds to use their posters and sales pitches to convince us to purchase the good or service in Boom Town. This time limit challenged the student presenters to choose their words wisely and to speak with urgency. We were once again very impressed by the caliber of creativity pouring out of our students. One student convinced us to shop at his wagon parts store because his “lumber would never give you a splinter in your seat!”

The judges provided anonymous feedback on whether or not each presentation was convincing. Following their presentations, the students reflected as a group on improvements they would make if given the chance to deliver their sales pitches again. Students were eager to tweak and improve their work. In addition, students had the opportunity to use our blog after their presentations to further explore different points of view related to the pioneers’ journey.

Mrs. Hare and I have been very pleased with the progress of our unit. Through planning together and coteaching, we supplemented one another’s strengths and overcame each other’s weaknesses. Without this teacher, I would have a deficit in content-area knowledge. Without me, the teacher would have struggled in the instruction of creating the poster and facilitating students’ use of technology tools such as blogs and wikis.

This collaborative project has been a journey that provided tremendous benefit to our students, and thanks to this Wild West adventure, we know that they have a mature and impressive understanding of the pioneers’ experience and new lives in the West.

Michelle Wilson
is the school librarian at North Highland Elementary School in the Jefferson County Board of Education school district (Birmingham, Alabama). She is also a National Board Certified Teacher who takes great joy in her family, advocating for orphan care, and mentoring school librarians. You can follow her on Twitter at @mwilson518.
VOYAGE ON THE S.S. LIBRARY LEADERSHIP
Setting Sail in a Sea of Learning

Ahoy mateys! All hands on deck! Welcome to the SS School Library Leadership maiden voyage, which departed from the University of Vermont (UVM) during the 2010 fall semester! Twelve intrepid sailors followed their sense of adventure into uncharted waters with cocaptains Judy Kaplan and Susan Ballard in an online collaboration that provided a powerful learning experience for all. The metaphor of the voyage set the scene for an interactive experience that transcended time constraints and geographic isolation, and encouraged networking and collaborative projects. Facilitators and participants explored leadership roles and opportunities for school librarians, as they examined their own practices and educational environments through an inquiry-based model based in an asynchronous online graduate-level course School Library Leadership for 21st-Century Schools. In addition, the instructors provided a working model of coteaching and reflective practice.

Building on concepts found in AASL’s Learning4Life National Implementation Plan (L4L) to provide support for “on the ground” practitioners, a new series of online courses offered by UVM for school library professionals in practice provides opportunities to focus on current issues within education and school librarianship in a sustained and supportive learning environment. The key component of the coursework is collaboration between both the facilitators (instructors) and the participant school librarians (SLs). Learning from and with colleagues in a professional learning community, or community of practice, is demonstrated to be a best-practice model for transformational learning (DuFour 2004; Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder 2002). In Vermont, school librarians have a history of formal and informal networking, and are embracing collaboration through opportunities to connect in a virtual world through Web 2.0 interactive applications.

Vermont, a small New England state bordered by New Hampshire to the east, and Lake Champlain and New York State to the west, evokes postcard images of snowy ski trails and vibrant fall colors along rustic country roads. A standing old-timer’s joke is that there are more cows than people, but the twenty-first century is alive and well, especially in the thriving community of Vermont school librarians. Spread across the four corners of the state, in rural schools with declining populations, and schools in thriving urban and suburban pockets, school librarians are addressing educational change in their communities. While school librarians are often geographically separated, and many experience feelings of professional isolation as a result, new technologies and an active professional organization, the Vermont School Library Association (VSLA), support cooperation and colleagueship for practitioners.
Professional development opportunities for school librarians in practice have historically included VSLA state-wide conferences and yearly workshops, along with AASL-recommended webinars, regional and national conferences, and traditional or online courses. Since AASL’s *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* (2007) were released, Vermont school librarians have been contemplating and discussing how to incorporate them into their own instruction and to share them within their local school districts. Additionally, the publication of *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (AASL 2009) presented another growth opportunity to the school library community as the guidelines challenged them to make bold leaps forward in the development of programs and services. To address these challenges, VSLA learning sponsored a series of L4L boot camps, which have been well attended and have provided a launch pad for beginning the transition to implementation of the AASL learning standards in accordance with the program guidelines.

**Captains Courageous: Collaborating in Real and Virtual Space**

Judy Kaplan, coordinator of the School Library Media Studies Sequence, which is embedded within a Master of Education program in the UVM College of Education and Social Sciences, and Susan Ballard, then director of librarymedia and technology in the Londonderry (NH) School District and now president-elect of AASL, crossed paths in the spring of 2010. Judy was preparing to present a new course in the fall, and asked if Susan might be willing to collaborate or coteach the course. Susan was also leading the implementation of the L4L program for AASL, and they recognized that the course could be an exciting option for professional development centered on AASL’s standards and program guidelines.

In particular, *Empowering Learners* featured a new area focusing on the leadership role of the SL: “The school library program is built by professionals who model leadership and best practice for the school community” (AASL 2009, 45). Ideas presented within the section explore what leadership looks like and how it relates to advocacy. In the face of budget reductions and educational reform initiatives, school librarians need a visible and active role in local and district schools, and should develop leadership skills to advocate for their programs. In addition, the ongoing need to ensure powerful instructional partnerships through collaboration and coteaching remains an essential element of successful school library practice. Judy and Susan identified these critical ideas as focal points for developing the newly minted course for practitioners in northern New England.

While Judy lives in Vermont and Susan in New Hampshire, they were able to connect, and hash out ideas and concepts through face-to-face meetings at locations halfway between their homes, and via e-mail, real-time Skype and web-conferencing sessions, and to share modules through Google docs to build the course. Both busy in their professional lives, the flexibility of the various means of communication allowed them to move forward in planning. In framing the course, they agreed that they wanted to develop a robust problem-centered, project-based study that would engage the participants with the content and create a “cohort” experience through social media to bring about transformational learning. As the discussions evolved and the syllabus was refined, Judy and Susan planned a timeline and divided responsibilities for launching the “cruise.” Somehow, the idea of a journey together seemed an apt metaphor for this venture, and it injected a new twist for creating a theme to follow in an inquiry model. Though there may have been times when they went a bit “overboard” with the theme, it did help “anchor” their thinking and gave the students something to reflect on as they made steady progress to the end.

The modules were then developed through Google docs, with one person taking the lead, and the other offering comments and revisions. Judy had experience
Provisioning the Ship

Food for thought about school library leadership was provided through required texts, online readings and websites, and database research. In addition to *Empowering Learners and Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action*, required texts included Sharon Coatney’s *Many Faces of School Librarianship* (2010), Kristin Fontichiaro’s *21st-Century Learning in School Libraries* (2010), and Sandra Hassell-Hughes and Violet H. Harada’s *School Reform and the School Library Media Specialist* (2007). Other topical readings and websites were embedded within the content modules. Participants designed research using databases available through the UVM Library website.

The Blackboard content was presented through print, VoiceThread, vodcasts, and website links. Guest speakers were invited for real-time sessions through Scopia Desktop, a videoconferencing software program. Linda Keating, director of curriculum and assessment in the Chittenden (VT) Central Supervisory Union, explained the hierarchy of school governance and introduced the Common Core Standards. Kristin Fontichiaro (University of Michigan) answered questions about leadership and literacy. Susan reviewed learning theory that drives constructivism and inquiry-based learning. These sessions were recorded and archived so that they could be viewed at a later time by anyone not able to participate in the live videoconferences. Asynchronous online content allowed for participation anytime night or day. VoiceThread was used to present materials and ideas, and videos and vodcasts through YouTube gave a face and voice to deliver information and spark online discussions. An outside wiki was also created within Wikispaces as a networking space, and to support continued learning at the end of the course.

Communication on Sea, Land, and in Cyberspace

Communication was critical to enhancing a cohort experience and creating a sustained and supportive environment for taking risks and immersing in shared learning. The discussion board topics assigned weekly offered an exchange of ideas and experiences. Participants were actively engaged in the process. Even after the discussion of the weekly topic had moved on, individuals would go back and continue to add reflections to discussion threads. Judy and Susan were also actively involved as they responded to discussion board and blog prompts, and shared comments on projects with the group.

Inquiry- and problem-based assignments required focus groups to tackle issues and present findings using a variety of Web 2.0 applications: wikis, podcasts, vodcasts, Google sites, blogs, and so on. To collaborate within the groups, some used Skype, or even met face to face outside the course. The final projects were coordinated through the class Wikispaces site for all to see and comment on.

Ports of Call

The remaining three- to four-week modules were organized around essential questions to activate prior knowledge, and gain new perspectives and understanding of 21st-century leadership and education topics.

Module Two centered on educational leadership models, school governance, and opportunities for school librarians to enhance their leadership skills in a variety of areas such as technology, literacy, collaboration, evidence-based practice, advocacy, and inquiry learning.
Module Three looked at action research as a tool to identify and plan for change within school libraries, and to involve other stakeholders in the process. Connections to learning theory and pedagogy drove the self-generated group action-planning projects.

Module Four examined personal and professional learning plans and networks, job descriptions, and evaluations that enhance goal setting for educators. Each participant was asked to set a leadership goal and share it within a personal learning network.

Module Five was a one-week look at creating a vision of the future and reflecting on how to move forward as a school library leader.

**Souvenirs to Take Home**

Each module had a self-selected group or individual project that would have a practical application for the SLs. Reflection was integral to the process. The takeaways were self-designed around collaboration opportunities, based on topics and interests that were meaningful for practice. Groups were organized using the discussion board medium, with participants floating ideas and inviting others to explore topics. The projects were designed to be open-ended, and allowed for creativity and outside-the-box thinking. Projects and research were tackled with professional rigor, and the results far exceeded expectations. Participants pushed themselves and each other to try new Web applications and established high standards for their final products. The participants and the facilitators were joint learners in the process.

**Sandbox in the Cybersphere**

The class Wikispace site, a sandbox for all, became the central clearinghouse for information and projects that remained in existence after the Bb site closed at the end of the course. At the Wikispace site members created pages, added resources, and connected to other work they have done within and outside the course. As a members-only site, it remains a powerful takeaway, as well as a place to continue the quest for new learning.

**Reflections and Relationships Returning to Port**

As the ship returned to port, everyone was asked to recount the journey we had ventured on together, and to self-assess her work. Self-assessment is a very difficult task, but it was an important way for the facilitators to model the self-assessment strategies in 4.3 of Standards for the 21st-Century Learner: “Pursue personal and aesthetic growth” (AASL 2007, 7).

In final reflections, the focus was on new learning and relationships through collaboration. And here a few voices from the crew:

**Jennifer Faith,**
*Stowe Elementary School*

“Effective 21st-century leaders are often the emergent leaders rather than the appointed leaders. The idea of leading by example and finding a need and filling it has become one of my leadership goals as I move forward.”

**Amy Rider,**
*Georgia Elementary & Middle School*

“Prior to this semester, thinking of myself as being in a leadership role never occurred to me. I don’t think anyone who knows me would ever label me a follower or at least not a very good one. I am very independent. However, I have never considered myself a leader. My definition of a leader has been that person who moves things along, gets things done, involves other people, has a vision they seek to fulfill and who has a forceful presence to do the leading. This course has made me reconsider that definition a bit. I am that person.”

**Heidi Heustis,**
*Charlotte Community School*

“This class has provided me with a wide variety of tools that I have been able to implement into my daily practice. I was able to pace my own learning so that it worked with my family schedule. All of my questions were answered, and new ones were generated along the way. What I take away from this course is a toolkit of resources, a learning community of committed colleagues, and the knowledge base needed to keep up with a constantly evolving profession.”

**Emily DiGuilio,**
*Fairfax Community School*

“At the conclusion of this course, I see how my ideas about my practice and my goals for the future have expanded and been enriched. Reflecting on the many ways that my thinking and actions have changed and on how to approach my continued growth, I appreciate how the structure of this course provided opportunities for immediate reflection through the online discussion board and blogging. The wonderful support I’ve received as a student in this course has helped me to find a renewed direction in my professional journey.”

“Fairfax Community School: Pursue personal and aesthetic growth” (AASL 2007, 7).
“The multifaceted nature of this course appealed to my varied learning styles and interests, while modeling what librarian leadership sounds like, looks like, and feels like. My ability to connect with this deep and wide sea of knowledge was maintained by the community of learners we became, and my passion for excellence.”

Linda McSweeney,
Stowe Middle/High School

“If I am expecting my students to become 21st-century learners, I had better hold myself to the same standards: think, create, share, and grow. My plan is still a work in progress, but thanks to this course, I do have a plan, a vision, and no longer feel that I’m drifting (most days warp-speed drifting, but drifting all the same) aimlessly.”

It has been gratifying to know that our collaboration can continue even though the class Blackboard space is closed! Judy, Susan, and several class members were fortunate to be able to connect and present a session about this experience as part of the Vermont Dynamic Landscapes conference—a joint venture of the Vermont Information Technology Association for the Advancement of Learning (VITA-Learn) and VSLA, and look forward to additional opportunities to stay connected.

Conclusions about Collaboration and Coteaching: What Does It Take?

Collaboration and coteaching can be very powerful but require mutual respect, trust, strong communication skills (writing, listening, and speaking) and follow-through, in addition to some specific dispositions. As Judy and Susan considered the dispositions that they and the SLs needed to bring to the process to ensure success, it was interesting to note that most were identified by Gail Bush and Jami L. Jones (2009) as being those needed by today’s school librarian, and they include:

· Critical thinking
· Professionalism
· Creative thinking
· Collaborating
· Leading
· Lifelong learning
· Flexibility

In the online and virtual environment it is also crucial to be highly organized and very savvy regarding time management. In addition, attention must focus on a perpetual learning curve when it comes to using new technologies, and there is a compelling need to constantly be aware of, and seek means to redress, the lack of face-to-face, nuanced communication.

More information on Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs and Standards for the 21st Century Learner in Action can be found at <www.ala.org/aasl/guidelinesandstandards>.

Standards for the 21st Century Learner can be viewed or downloaded for free at <www.ala.org/aasl/standards>.
Coteaching might be described as educators bringing to the table what they do best. When these educators’ skills and talents are interwoven, a unique design evolves that is most successful in supporting student learning outcomes. Our school, Dumbarton Elementary, is a Title I school with a very diverse student population. Coteaching is an instructional practice used daily in our school. Special education, reading, and English Language Learner (ELL) teachers coteach every day in our classrooms to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all of our students.

"The staff believes that we can provide the greatest learning opportunities for our students by planning, teaching, and reflecting with our peers."

—Eileen Traveline, Principal of Dumbarton Elementary
Our school’s library program is devoted to 21st-century learning, and a major component of that is classroom-library collaboration. When the school librarian is involved in collaborating with the classroom teacher to coteach a unit or lesson, all populations are better served. We—Suzanna, the school librarian, and Becky, a fourth-grade teacher—have worked together on different lessons every year for the past several years. Each year we are more ambitious about our collaboratively planned and cotaught projects because we see the positive impact working together has on enriching our lessons for students.

Webster’s defines powwow as a conference or meeting for discussion, especially among friends or colleagues. Those same elements define a successful coteaching experience. It requires supportive relationships that are founded on mutual trust and respect. Coteaching also requires planning. Knowing that good planning requires a lot of time, we started early. We powwowed in late July to begin our first collaborative project for this school year. Suzanna brought AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner to Becky and wanted to design a project that infused those standards with classroom content. We already had a general idea of the direction we wanted to take: Our social studies standards include both a historic study of the American Indians living in Virginia and an identification of current state-recognized tribes.

Teaching these social studies standards in the past has resulted in our students simply memorizing facts. We wanted to bring the cultures of Virginia’s first inhabitants alive for our students. Becky especially wanted our students’ study of American Indians to include the point of view of Indians living in Virginia today.

Deciding on a Standard

During our first meeting, we determined which state social studies standard would lend itself to establish communication with the present-day American Indian tribes. Becky had previously attempted to communicate with several of the tribes that had

“As principal of Dumbarton, I am proud to say that coteaching and collaboration highlight the exceptional instruction at our school.”

—Eileen Traveline, Principal of Dumbarton Elementary
received state recognition, hoping to establish communication between her students and their young people, but failed to receive any feedback. Discouraged, she felt that her request was not well received, and she was apprehensive about trying again.

Suzanna, however, didn’t have these concerns, and felt that we could still initiate communication with a tribe. Continuing to investigate, we found a line in our state’s “Essentials of Learning” that states students must know that “American Indians, who trace their family histories back to well before 1607, continue to live in all parts of Virginia today... there are currently eight state recognized tribes of Virginia.” We thought this essential was a great one to dive into and that it would lend itself to communication with Indians today. We had it! Now we needed to find a tribe we hoped would be willing to communicate with our students and us.

**Searching for a Tribe**

We started to search on the Web, and we came across the Virginia Council on Indians website. Further searching revealed to us exactly what was required of a tribe to get state recognition. Surprisingly, we also found more tribes that had received state recognition since the state social studies standard was written.

This is where we discovered the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, and the story of their struggle to obtain state recognition. What an amazing story it was! Now, we really started to work together. We read the state recognition committee’s report aloud to one another, and we were both mesmerized by the story of this tribe. They struggled month after month to prove with documentation that they were, in fact, a legitimate tribe of Virginia. They were the only tribe that had to go through this grueling process. This report read like a drama, and although overwhelming documentation proved that this tribe did exist, ultimately the recommendation of the council was to not grant this tribe state recognition. Yet, in spite of this recommendation, the General Assembly of Virginia did grant recognition to the Nottoway.

After learning about the Nottoway’s struggle for official recognition, we had so many questions. Why is state recognition so important? What are the benefits for having acquired state recognition? If this tribe existed in Virginia, why don’t we teach our students about this tribe and its struggles? It was as though lightning had struck, and here was our project. Our culminating activity would be a mock appeal of a Virginia Indian tribe to the Virginia Council on Indians for state recognition. We wanted to model this process on the Nottoway tribe’s struggle for recognition. We were also hoping that we had perhaps found an opportunity for communication, but wondered, where do we go from here? Will the Nottoway’s talk with us? We hoped, since their story was unique and they were so new to the list of recognized tribes, they might be receptive to a dialogue. On the Nottoway website we learned they were having a powwow in September. There was our next step, attend the powwow.

**Making Personal Contact**

Attending the powwow is exactly what we did. We drove ninety minutes to the powwow and planned along the way. We used the trip as a meeting and bonding experience. After watching and taking pictures of some of the dancing, we walked to an information booth and told people there about our project. We ended up speaking with the chief’s husband who gave us the personal contact information of the chief of the Nottoway tribe, Lynnette Lewis Allston. Armed with this information and the possibility of contact with the tribe, we embarked on our unit.

On a personal level, we recognized that neither of us would have attended the powwow alone. We found strength in each other to keep our idea alive and to develop a unit that would make a significant impact on student learning. Even if we had gone to the powwow separately, we would never have approached the chief’s husband about our project; we would have missed the opportunity to get personal contact information that we never would have found online.

We had indications from our conversations at the powwow that the chief and tribe would be open to talking with us. We bought a book about their story, and Suzanna read it to Becky on the way home. We found in their book exactly the perspective we were seeking. The more we talked and the more we read, the more committed and excited we became, because we both knew that this was a great story. We discovered in each other a passion about the content of our instruction.

**The Gv-he Tribe**

How would this passion and content translate into an educational experience for the students? We decided that the class would create their own tribe, the Gv-he, which is a Cherokee word for “wildcat,” the Dumbarton Elementary School’s mascot. Their task would be to prove to a mock Virginia Council on Indians that they, the Gv-he, existed in Virginia throughout time. We looked closely at the six criteria for state recognition and determined that the students would create products that modeled the requirements for those criteria.
Suzanna’s background in research and technology was essential here. She converted the abstract concepts in the requirements to concrete products that fourth-grade students could create. Here is an example: One of the criteria for any tribe seeking state recognition is to provide a complete genealogy of the current tribe members that could be traced back as far as possible. To fulfill this requirement, the students in that group needed to research the concept of genealogy. They also needed to research the Iroquoian language (the language spoken in the area of the state chosen by the students). After completing this research, they used a software program to create a family tree. In addition, they created marriage licenses, similar to those documented in the late 1700s, and several census reports that spanned across the centuries.

Teaching the Unit

Preparation

To begin the unit, Suzanna taught the class about how to avoid plagiarism and how to evaluate and cite their sources.

Days 1 and 2

For the first two days of our “Virginia Indian” unit, we cotaught lessons to directly teach all the facts students needed to know for the state exam. We examined the curriculum, and Suzanna created interactive whiteboard lessons that presented the content. We cotaught the information about languages that the Virginia Indians of the past spoke, what they wore and ate, and how they built their houses.

Days 3 and 4

Reading strategies were the focus for the next two days. We knew the students would need the strategies necessary to comprehend nonfiction text and primary sources when doing research. We needed to present activities to the students to help them identify and use the text features they would encounter when searching for needed information. Becky introduced text features in the school library using a slide presentation, and Suzanna assisted using her skills with the interactive whiteboard. The following day the students worked together to create anchor charts (see figure 1).

Using news magazines, students searched for and cut out examples of the different features of nonfiction text. These examples were then placed on a chart that students were able to reference during the research. Becky had previously taught this lesson in her own classroom, but had never thought of collaborating with the school librarian before. Having Suzanna’s expertise to provide additional assistance and to support the students’ thinking had a great impact on keeping students on task, and engaged on their learning process and products.

Figure 1. The classroom teacher monitors the students’ creation of an anchor chart displaying nonfiction text features.
Day 5

On day five we told our students the story of the struggle the Nottoway Indians experienced while seeking state recognition (see figure 2).

We shared pictures from the Nottoway powwow with students and explained the project. Students voted on the name and location of the fictitious tribe that would petition the mock council.

Organizing Instruction and Monitoring Student Learning Outcomes

Days 6–13

Part of our planning had been to decide what students would be in which group. We discussed each child, thinking about students’ strengths and the tasks that would be required of them. Becky’s knowledge of her students was invaluable while placing students in groups according to their strengths, talents, and learning styles. We even had a newcomer to our class who had just arrived in the country and did not speak any English. He was a great artist so we made sure he was in the group producing historical maps (see figure 4).

With the help of our reading specialist, we placed our advanced readers in the group writing historical diaries (see figure 3).

Before they could begin writing, students had to read a historical fiction book written like a diary. The class was divided into a total of five groups to research and produce “primary documents” to prove their tribe’s existence.

Another important decision was to decide how this research project would be integrated into the day. We determined that for this part of the unit we should schedule the class to come to the school library every day in one-hour blocks for eight days. At this point we reexamined our objectives. This was an interdisciplinary unit requiring reading, researching, and writing skills to meet an objective in social studies. Because students were applying language arts strategies, they came to the school library during their Language Arts block of time. It was possible to devote this much time because of the school library’s flexible schedule and open-access checkout procedures.

Having five groups working simultaneously on different pieces of documentation was challenging. When students started their projects we collaborated with our reading specialist and ELL teacher. Having four adults in the school library helping the students produce these complex projects was critical to this process. The small-group instruction ensured success for all our learners. This special attention that was given to our students could never have been accomplished without the close relationships we share with our reading and ELL colleagues.
We provided students with tools to stay organized throughout the project. We gave them a tentative calendar with daily objectives to help them stay focused. We also provided them with graphic organizers and checklists to keep track of notes, self-reflections, and citations. We made sure we had materials in print and electronic versions on all reading levels for students to use.

As a team we constantly evaluated their projects to see what they weren’t understanding and redirected as needed. We assessed students’ writing, comprehension, and ability to use text features effectively. We met every day after school to powwow about what was working and what was not, reading and commenting on our students’ daily progress to keep them on track.

“Amazingly, the coteaching and collaboration extends outside the grade even to include the librarian, ELL teachers, and the reading specialist.”
—Eileen Traseline, Principal of Dumbarton Elementary

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“Personally, it was exciting to witness students completing projects and excitedly explaining to me what they were doing for their part of the project.”
—Eileen Traseline, Principal of Dumbarton Elementary

The Real Story
We really wanted the chief of the Nottoway tribe to come and speak to our students. We e-mailed back and forth with Chief Allston and finally found a date when she and her husband could visit with us. When the day arrived, we explained to our students that she was here to tell her people’s story and to talk about our students’ projects.

You would have thought Justin Bieber was in the school library, the way our students reacted to our special guests. Chief Allston brought the real primary documents that they used to gain state recognition (see figure 5). She also brought artifacts from her tribe. Then she told the story of their struggle to get state recognition. Her warm way of speaking immediately connected with the students. They were mesmerized by her, and finally understood that Indians are real and here today making great contributions to our society. She spent most of her time answering questions our students had. During the session, the students asked great questions that reflected their learning and met our objectives.

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After the Q & A, the students were invited to see all the documents up close and touch the artifacts. One student commented, “This is why I love school.”

“The philosophy of flexible scheduling in the library and a classroom teacher’s willingness to integrate a project across the curriculum led to an invaluable learning experience which culminated with a speaker bringing the project alive and students having the opportunity to share their learning.”

—Eileen Traveline, Principal of Dumbarton Elementary
What We Learned

Working together, we created a much richer experience for our students than we could have ever offered had we worked alone. This particular project was magical because the teacher and school librarian found in each other a common passion and concern for what and how our students are taught. By bouncing ideas off of each other, we were willing to step outside of the box and take risks. We were able to scaffold a complex subject into a manageable topic for our fourth-grade students to understand. Through this experience we grew as educators as well. We taught each other new technologies and ways to engage our students in higher-order thinking. Our enthusiasm for this project modeled that as educators we are lifelong learners also. This experience was a perfect example of the impact of job-embedded professional development—educators learning with and from one another during our daily practice of teaching.

Coteaching and collaboration provides a win-win situation for students and staff as everyone grows, learns, and enriches their skills and lives.
—Eileen Traveline, Principal of Dumbarton Elementary

By combining our talents, resources, and skills we created an engaging learning experience for our 21st-century learners. Suzanna brought to the table the research component and advanced technology skills required to make the project happen. Becky brought teaching strategies, curriculum content, and knowledge of her students. We both brought passion. Becky was enthusiastically willing to replace the lower-level thinking skills required to master the objectives in social studies with higher-level skills that the students could take with them for a lifetime. Suzanna was most willing to plug the concepts into products that the students could create. Combining this with the language arts strategies and skills pushed the students to read, think, make decisions, and evaluate to create their final products.

“Each person offers their expertise to the lesson/project in order to go beyond the basics of the curriculum.”
—Eileen Traveline, Principal of Dumbarton Elementary

In the process, we also had a great time. The powwow road trip sent us outside of our neighborhood, telling others about our school. We brought back our own pictures and a story to share with our students, making it real for them, as well as for us. When Chief Allston visited, one student asked, what was the main reason she tried so hard to get state recognition? She answered that she wanted children to know the important heritage of all Virginians. Through coteaching this unit we believe that we helped make her vision come true.

This experience was a perfect example of the impact of job-embedded professional development—educators learning with and from one another during our daily practice of teaching.

Suzanna L. Panter is a school librarian at Dumbarton Elementary School in Henrico County, Virginia, winner of AASL’s 2011 National School Library Program of the Year. She has presented nationally on serving ELL students in the school library and was an AASL-sponsored ALA Emerging Leader in 2009.

Rebecca L. Kelley is a fourth-grade teacher at Dumbarton Elementary School in Henrico County, Virginia. She has a Master’s degree in reading and is a past recipient of the R.E.B. Award for teaching excellence.

Selected Resources:


Stacy Cameron
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Adria Butcher
apbutcher@prosper-isd.net
Christine Haight
I (Stacy) have the honor of serving the staff and students of Prosper High School as the school librarian. Collaborating and teaching alongside classroom teachers are areas of my library program I believe comprise some of the most important work that I do. I spend much of my time developing relationships that will result in coteaching opportunities and look forward to working with students when I teach important information literacy skills. Collaboration and coteaching with classroom teachers and campus specialists are the cornerstones of a successful school library program. Whereas collaboration is the process of planning a lesson or unit of instruction, coteaching suggests a much deeper level of collaboration—one in which both the teacher and campus specialist (be it school librarian or instructional technology coach or both) are working in sync as they codeliver content to a class while maintaining their respective areas of expertise.

Judi Moreillon asserts that coteaching “is one way for school librarians to position the library program at the center of the school’s academic program where it can contribute significantly to student achievement” (2009, 29). A recent project with some of our juniors provided such a
a multimedia project in which students would create their own public-service announcements (PSAs). The student-created PSAs would include evidence of ethos, pathos, and logos. This project would also allow students to explore media-literacy topics, properly select and cite copyright-friendly music and images, and use a variety of technological equipment and software programs to create the final product.

The Planning
Our initial planning consisted of only one face-to-face meeting. Our goals for the students were varied but clear:

- Identify ways in which the media use color and persuasion techniques in advertisements, and apply this to their own creations;
- Identify ethos, pathos, and logos in popular PSAs, and demonstrate this understanding in a new medium;
- Locate and use copyright-friendly music and images as needed and cite them properly; and
- Effectively use technology to create an original product.

Our goals for our professional team were equally varied as each of us had her own goals for working with the students. The classroom teacher, Adria, wanted the information and technology experts to present useful information resources and tools to her students in a new and exciting way. Christine, our instructional technology coach, looked forward to the opportunity to share with students the effective use of the technology and help them have a deeper understanding of the technology they were going to use to prevent problems before they arose. And for me, I relished the opportunity to teach the students about media literacy and proper citation. We set dates for the instructional lessons and adjourned our meeting. Additional planning took place either via e-mail or through short conversations in the halls.

The time came to put all our planning into practice. What did the coteaching experience look like to each professional? What did each of us find valuable and important throughout the process? Did our students benefit from the coteaching? Below are our individual thoughts about this coteaching experience shared in our own words.

The Classroom Teacher
While planning this assignment, I (Adria) wanted the kids to experience a seamless concoction of the English skills at hand, the technology, and the media literacy knowledge necessary for creating an effective PSA. It was just a natural instinct for me to invite experts in the other fields to help with this assignment. Having Stacy and Christine speak with the kids about possible issues, pointers, and examples alleviated quite a bit of chaos before the kids ever started the project. This preparation really enabled the kids to take necessary technological precautions, and to consider their messages and how to best communicate with their audience.

The planning process for this was quite easy—all I had to do was invite these colleagues into the classroom and explain to them the end product. Stacy was armed with information: examples of
effective PSAs, a video on how to create citations for music and images, and how color and persuasion techniques can affect a message. Plus, she and Christine built a webpage with links and all of the information (due dates, project specs) I had given to the kids. Christine handled all of the technology troubleshooting tips, and because she had seen the common mistakes kids tend to make while using cameras and computers, many of these stresses were eliminated.

Overall, the kids were able to focus on using the skills learned, instead of worrying about possible pitfalls. Before my colleagues came into the classroom, I explained to my students that these ladies had their own professional expertise, and that they were here to help us with different facets of the project. My students knew they were responsible for getting their specific media-literacy and technology questions answered by Stacy and Christine—thus, giving learners ownership for ironing out their own weak areas. Seeing that even adults collaborate and take advantage of one another’s talents really opened students’ eyes to what group work is all about.

The Instructional Technology Coach

The use of technology with students requires careful and thoughtful preparation. When Adria approached me (Christine) about the project she was working on, flashbacks played in my mind of times in the past I had worked with students on similar projects. The scenario usually unfolded on the day the project was due and involved a panicked student who promised me that her video had played at home, but now would not work at school. While I did my best to help where I was able, the due date usually did not provide me with enough time to help solve the student’s problem.

I was thrilled to have Adria solicit my help at the beginning of the project so that, through my instruction, I would be able to teach her students not only how to use the equipment and software, but also help them understand more about how the technology works. That way, if something did come up, they would be better prepared with the knowledge and resources to correct the issue. Planning with both Adria and Stacy, during which I was able to hear about the entire project, helped me determine whether or not we were using the best technology to meet the learning goals of the project as opposed to using technology for technology’s sake. I concluded that using Windows Movie Maker and Flip cameras would be the best technological resources.

Using what I learned from our planning meeting, I worked with Stacy to put together a project webpage for students; the page incorporated resources on using the Flip cameras and Movie Maker software, as well as links to free websites for obtaining copyright-friendly music and images. When I came into the class, Stacy had already talked to the students about what a good PSA video looks like.

My job on Day 2 was to help them take that information and put it into the video. We gave the students options to use any tools at their disposal; however, I went over the Web resources on Flip cameras and Movie Maker, as these are the tools we have available on campus for student use. I also used this opportunity to educate the students on copyright issues with the music and pictures they were going to use in their videos. At this time, it was helpful to have Stacy in the room, as well. In some areas of instruction she could interject with more information than I had on a subject. We showed the students where to find Creative Commons licensed images and music to use in their videos. Stacy also talked to them at this time about proper citation for digital media.

The School Librarian

I (Stacy) was especially excited about teaming up with Adria and Christine on this project because I would be able to share media-literacy concepts with students and help them learn how to properly cite

Seeing that even adults collaborate and take advantage of one another’s talents really opened students’ eyes to what group work is all about.
image and music sources—areas of instruction that, in my opinion, are lacking in many classrooms yet are of great importance to today’s information producer.

As both of my peers have stated earlier, Christine and I put together a project webpage that resides on the school library webpage <http://phs-library-media-center.phs.prosperisd.schoolfusion.us>. This is particularly useful for students so they have a one-stop location for all their assignment information, as well as links to resources that I think students will find useful.

On Day 1 of the lesson sequence, I cotaught with Adria about the media-literacy concepts of color and persuasion. Students viewed sample PSAs from The Ad Council and PETA, immediately followed by discussion in which students identified evidence of ethos, pathos, and logos. When students struggled in identifying the rhetorical devices in the PSAs, Adria retaught and reinforced the concepts as necessary and linked previous classroom instruction with the current lesson. The beauty of coteaching is that it allows for this kind of exchange to take place—a symbiotic relationship in which educators work together as a team “by alternatively engaging in the dual roles of teacher and learner, expert and novice, giver and recipient of knowledge or skills” (Villa, Thousand, and Nevin 2008, 5).

Day 2 of the PSA project paired me with Christine. Her goal for the lesson was to share with students the proper use of technology, as well as how to obtain copyright-friendly images and music. This, too, was a coteaching event as both of us were able to address issues of copyright: Christine teaching on the proper use of images and music, and me teaching on how to properly cite them in the presentation.

While many school librarians serve the dual role of both librarian and technology integrator, in our district these roles are divided between two professionals. This working arrangement is ideal, and we frequently team-teach as we did with Adria’s students on this day. One of the reasons I most love working with a technology partner in such a situation is that not only do the students benefit but they get to put a face to the name of the human resource on campus who is available to help them. I want our students to see me and think “information and resources.” Likewise, Christine wants students to look at her and think “technology.” As much as we are resources for our teachers, we are resources for the students—thus, the importance of teaming as we did for this lesson.

Our Evaluation of the Coteaching Experience

Overall, we were very pleased with the lessons and their effectiveness with the students. The goals we had set for the students beforehand had been realized through the production of some amazing PSAs. The students were able to successfully demonstrate their understanding of ethos, pathos, and logos in a way that was both engaging and relevant. As for our coteaching efforts, we were pleased with that as well. Moreillon (2009) so eloquently describes the coteaching process when she states, “When educators come together to teach and learn together, to share talents, and to share struggles and successes,

We are building community when we work together and this connectedness was felt by all involved.
the resulting sense of community and connectedness can support a collaborative culture” (2009, 30). We are building community when we work together and this connectedness was felt by all involved.

What Did the Students Think?
Coteaching has so many benefits, yet the greatest of these are to the students. When educators engage in a coteaching experience, the student-to-teacher ratio is lower, students receive more individual attention, and groups of students are better supported as they receive instruction in a variety of ways (Moreillon 2009).

Adria surveyed some of her students several weeks after the lessons took place and asked them what they liked best about the coteaching experience. Savannah enjoyed it, telling us:

“The use of an instructor from more than just the English department truly heightened my understanding of the different aspects of our technology project. Rather than focusing on the English viewpoint of the PSA, Mrs. Haight and Mrs. Cameron were extremely helpful in broadening my knowledge on research and technology, which increased the quality of my project by far.”

Another of Adria’s students, Nicole, agreed with her peer:

“Having teachers from different departments provide information and advice helped me think and plan for the finished product rather than one particular aspect. This interdisciplinary style of teaching gave me a better understanding of other fields of study. In turn, I am able to appreciate English better than before.”

Parker shared with his teacher how the collaborative teaching format helped ease his anxiety:

“When I first began the project, I was a little intimidated by the amount of technology at hand. Having the speakers come into the classroom and work through each resource step-by-step helped me understand which resources I needed to use and how to use them.”

Just as each educator brings her own talents and expectations to the coteaching experience, so do the students! A collaboratively planned and taught lesson allows for students to experience a variety of teaching formats and comprehend the lesson content from different perspectives.

Looking Ahead
The concept of coteaching is a relatively new one in the field of librarianship; however, it is not unfamiliar to those in the special education world. Books abound on the topic. What can school librarians learn from their special education peers about this subject? How can we deepen our relationship with fellow classroom teachers to move from one of collaboration to that of coteaching? These are all questions we should actively explore. Hanging in my school library office is a poster that says, “If you want to be incrementally better, be competitive. If you want to be exponentially better, be cooperative.” What a great reminder of the power in working together! Cooperation, collaboration, and coteaching make us exponentially better. For my library program and my own professional development, this is the ultimate goal.

Stacy Cameron is the district information specialist for Prosper (TX) Independent School District. She has worked as a librarian at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She is currently the librarian at both Prosper High School and Reynolds Middle School, and leads the district’s team of information specialists. This is her seventh year as a school librarian.

Adria Butcher teaches English III AP and English IV AP at Prosper (TX) High School. She has taught English in various facets from middle school to high school for seven years. After working as a producer in Dallas, Texas, she had a calling to become a teacher and has never looked back.

Christine Haight is the instructional technology coach at Prosper (TX) High School. She was formerly a high school math teacher. This is her third year as the campus ITC.

Works Cited:
TOGETHER WE CAN!
The Collaborative Spirit at Forest Lake Elementary Technology Magnet School Energizes Learning for Students

Kappy Steck, Principal
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Lizzie Padget, School Librarian
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A Principal’s Point of View

Collaboration is the key! It is the driving force that has allowed our school, Forest Lake Elementary Technology Magnet School, to be consistently recognized as a “school that works” for all members of our learning community. Our staff, teachers, students, and parents enthusiastically embrace the collaborative spirit that is a vital, energizing force throughout all phases of teaching and learning.

Culture of Collaboration

Teachers need the support of school specialists to meet the ever-increasing social and academic needs of our students. Realizing the need to weave technology, literacy, and research skills into teaching and learning, our first Collaborative Conferences (CCs) were formed in 1996. Our school librarian (SL) and part-time instructional technology specialist (ITS) were selected to cochair the monthly meetings. Grade-level teachers are expected to spend one entire planning period in the CCs, designing unit plans that are anchored by state and national standards. As the unit plan is formed, there is a definite division of responsibilities between the classroom teacher, the ITS, and the SL. In 2001 our curriculum resource teacher (CRT) became an additional valued facilitator of the meetings. Soon CCs became biweekly meetings and are currently held weekly. A giant curriculum map showing long-range plans for nine weeks anchors the collaborative space.

Focus on Standards, Differentiated Instruction, and Lesson Evaluation

The CCs always begin with chocolate to get everyone energized. Then armed with state and national standards, assessment guidelines, test data, and related resources, the teams work diligently to prepare or refine a unit plan. The unit plan begins with national and state standards, an essential question, focus questions, and pre-unit assessment. Additional components of the planning guide include individualized/differentiated or tiered learning strategies, as well as post-assessment techniques. Teaching responsibilities are clearly divided among the classroom teachers, the CRT, ITS, and the SL. A final critical component of the Forest Lake Collaborative Form is the evaluation. When the unit is completed, the teachers, CRT, ITS, and SL meet to see what worked and what needs to be modified before reteaching. This critical evaluative “metacognition piece” of the plan requires honest reflection, as well as a review of the effectiveness of media resources.

Essential Role of the School Library Program

As Principal, I have always contended that a strong school library program plays a significant role in academic achievement, and thus the library should function as the hub of the school. As a result, I have ensured that our school library runs on a modified flexible schedule. Even in the current economic times, I have maintained blocks of open-access time so that research studies can be a vital part of our media curriculum. The school library then functions as a natural extension of the inquiry-driven classroom.

Collaboration cannot happen in a vacuum, and it is critical that our SL has the opportunity to work closely with all facets of teaching and learning. Our recently renovated state-of-the-art library has many areas with soft seating, open floor space, and tables for collaborative planning. Teleconferencing equipment, two interactive whiteboards, a multimedia studio/presentation area, and a media wall provide additional areas for research and presentation. This 21st-century learning commons was designed to facilitate collaborative exploration, problem solving, and research experiences to inspire the next generation of explorers.
Teachers keep up to date on the latest, greatest uses of educational technology by conferring weekly. CCs provide a means for master teachers to hone their crafts as they help new teachers develop. A CC is a nonthreatening, stimulating time for grade levels to come together to write, refine, and review unit plans. It is also a time to coach one another and provide ongoing training sessions for technology and other unit-related strategies. Furthermore, CCs are a “safe place” for teachers to voice frustrations or concerns so that solutions can be found.

As the school instructional leader, I also feel strongly that the SL should be an important member of all school committees. In this way she is an ever-present part of the shared vision. In today’s world it is so important that our students have the opportunity to develop research strategies to effectively use the wealth of information that is instantly available to them.

From the School Librarian’s Point of View

I know how fortunate I am to have a visionary principal like Dr. Kappy Steck! Not only does she fully understand the importance of the collaborative process for both teachers and students, but she is a staunch advocate for an open-access schedule that allows effective collaborative lessons to take place. By devising the CC model for our school, she has paved the way for consistent, meaningful team planning. I am fully immersed in grade-level standards and units so our print and nonprint media collections reflect the ongoing needs of our learners. The teachers know that they can depend on the ITS, the CRT, and me to be active, responsible teaching partners.

Collaboration in Action

A current collaborative unit plan is our fifth-grade ecosystems unit. After reviewing state and national standards and carefully forging a working rubric, a unit plan was formed. Classes were scheduled into the school library for three consecutive days of research. Before the fifth-graders came to the library, the teacher introduced the project guidelines, rubric, and a series of key vocabulary words that would be a part of each ecosystem. The students completed a K-W-H-L chart to establish prior knowledge as well as guiding questions for their research.

During the introductory lesson, I reviewed research skills including search strategies, note-taking, and bibliographic entries. After choosing an ecosystem, the students were then encouraged to use both print and nonprint resources to locate information about the ecosystem. Following the research-gathering sessions in the school library, the fifth-grade teachers and I set up an “Ecosystem Conference” so the students studying a particular area would have the chance to ask questions of an expert about their chosen ecosystem. Not only were the students able to find new information, but they were able to see that interviews are an important way to find answers to their questions. A noted nonfiction author is coming to share valuable information about two ecosystems, as well as the steps taken in his own research process.

Gathering and citing the information from reliable sources is critical, but an effective presentation of the material learned is a true measure of understanding. The ITS and I are working closely with the ecosystem groups as they devise ways to effectively present their environmental area to the rest of the class. Armed with a rubric, a working bibliography, and information gathered from print and nonprint sources, as well as from an interview, the student groups are devising presentations such as news shows, PowerPoint presentations, and/or interactive whiteboard lessons. We work especially hard to create an atmosphere in both the classroom and the school library that showcases and values student contributions/products.

Even our kindergarten students collaborate to do research projects. A resounding favorite is the penguin unit. Students choose a type of penguin and then meet in groups to use print and nonprint sources to gather information. Once again, the CRT, ITS, and I work with both the teachers and students in the

We work especially hard to create an atmosphere in both the classroom and the school library that showcases and values student contributions/products.
research and presentation phases of the project. For a culminating project, the “penguin collaborative groups” share their information via Microsoft Photo Story.

Proven Value of Collaboration

The students see the core curriculum teachers, the CRT, the ITS, and me as a working, caring collaborative team. As partners in the process, both the ITS and I serve as facilitators as the students refine/practice their final presentations. We also assist the teachers with the assessment of the group interaction, as well as the final product.

Collaboration works at Forest Lake because it is a critical component on Dr. Steck’s list of high expectations for effective 21st-century learning. The pace of the digital age does not allow us to rest on our laurels. The goal of our collaboration model is to stay focused on quality teaching and learning so that we continuously do what we say we are doing!

Is an effective collaboration model easy to implement? No! Is it worth it? Yes! We are convinced that Forest Lake Elementary Technology Magnet School has received recognition because visitors have seen and “felt” the enthusiastic, passionate, collaborative spirit of our school. A few of our most recent honors include:

- NASA Explorer School
- Intel School of Distinction
- Magnet School of Distinction
- Edutopia “Schools That Work” recognition
- Inclusion in NBC Education Nation—Places People Learn

Fifth-grade teacher Tammy Lundy expresses it this way, “Time spent during CC is beneficial to teachers and students. Teachers have time to consult with the school librarian, curriculum coordinator, and technology specialist to plan units of study. These collaborative times are well worth the investment as teachers have the support and resources available to plan and integrate technology and other subjects within the unit of study.”

Summary

Our CC model is an evolving means for our teachers and specialists to stay abreast of state and national standards, emerging technology, and current best practices in teaching and learning. Beginning as a shared vision, CCs are now our primary vehicle for vertical and horizontal planning. You can view of video about our collaborative work on the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development website at <www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol6/619-video.aspx>.

Perhaps a definition attributed to Andrew Carnegie said it best: “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision; the ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results” (Carnegie 2006). Forest Lake is an uncommon place because we care deeply about all members of our learning community, and this caring shows in the ways that we work together in all phases of teaching and learning. Together we can!

Kappy Steck has been an educator for almost thirty years. During her tenure, she has served in a variety of roles—middle and elementary classroom teacher, school counselor, and assistant principal. Currently, she is the principal of Forest Lake Elementary Technology Magnet School.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Padget has been in education for over thirty-six years. Before assuming her current position as a teacher–librarian at Forest Lake Elementary Technology Magnet School, she worked as a middle school teacher and as an elementary teacher of gifted and talented students.

Works Cited:

True collaborations involve varied partnerships with shared planning and responsibilities.

School librarians new and seasoned should consistently build relationships to foster collaborative work. For eight years I have been building the library program at Maryvale High School (grades 9–12, 2600+ students). My district is inner-city, low socio-economic status, and primarily Hispanic. We once had low achievement test scores and high dropout rates, but with everyone working very hard, these numbers, in recent years, have greatly improved. The district mission is “Preparing Every Student for Success in College, Career and Life.” What better mission could a school librarian want?

Building Collaboration

For the school librarian, collaboration begins with both the business side of the library and personal interactions. I was shocked when I arrived at a 1950s-like library with a couple of old computers, dusty books, and little foot traffic. Besides cleanup and a promotion to get funding for modernization, which was provided, I needed to get the support of teachers and to create an environment and atmosphere that students were eager to visit.

Marketing the product takes work, but getting the brand recognized is crucial. I held every sort of reading or writing contest, put up displays for school-wide programs, and sent out announcements about the library almost daily on the intercom, via e-mail, and in print.

On the personal side, I introduced myself to staff throughout the school. During these conversations, I learned about instructional units and offered my assistance to teachers. When I found websites of interest, I emailed members of a department even if I didn’t know the teachers personally. Weeding materials and purchasing new books including graphic novels, plus having chess and checkers games available during lunchtime increased student traffic while I built relationships to encourage teachers to send students to the school library. For example, just a brief chat with a Spanish teacher led to a scavenger hunt in the school library, which I set up using library terms in Spanish from a chapter in their textbook and continued to co-teach in subsequent years. This shared teaching experience was a great beginning. The classroom teacher taught the chapter lesson and vocabulary practice while I provided the reinforcement of vocabulary with library signs, and wrote and directed the scavenger hunt.
Building a Customer Base

Lunchtime, staff parking lot, and wait-time conversations at the copy machine led to friendships and discoveries of shared interests in books, teaching, and learning. I held staff book discussions. I learned the curricula and became valued for knowing materials to enhance various classroom lessons.

“For the early childhood teacher Mrs. Kilker assisted her with storytelling. For the culinary teacher she gave her tips on menu designs. For my fashion class, she gave us information on how to find the history of fashion. She has taught us research skills on finding scholarships. Also, she is knowledgeable about computer technology and is going to teach my classes how to make PowerPoint presentations.”

—Phyllis Harper, family and consumer science teacher

I wanted every student to know my name (and I make sure that I get to know theirs quickly, too) so I structured beginning-of-school orientation by scheduling every freshman and ESL class for a visit to the school library. English Language Learner students come every year so they repeatedly encounter the vocabulary of the library as their English language skills increase. I also arranged to have time during new-teacher orientation before the first day of school to engage teachers in discussions about working with the school library programs. During this session I explain my role as a collaborative teacher and teacher of information literacy.

I created lessons when I needed them. I really wanted to work with math teachers by offering supplemental practice for their classroom instruction. Early on, one lesson I advertised was “Dewey Decimal Day in the Library.”

After I explain the system, pairs of students find books on the shelves in a scavenger hunt. Next, each table group has a cart of scrambled books and races to shelf the cart correctly. Later, the math teacher and I developed a library-centered lesson about increasing and reducing fractions using cookbooks. We select the books, co-teach, monitor students’ work, and clarify concepts throughout the lesson.

“Multiple times I have collaborated with our librarian in order for my students to view one of my lesson plans in a different way”

—Lauren Mortenson, child development teacher

Collaboration Basics

“Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up.”

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

I created lessons when I needed them. I really wanted to work with math teachers by offering supplemental practice for their classroom instruction. Early on, one lesson I advertised was “Dewey Decimal Day in the Library.”

While some school libraries use electronic sign up, I prefer face-to-face interaction with teachers to work collaboratively. This way we share ideas and develop new ideas to create a rich learning environment for our students. We decide how we will structure our co-teaching. For computer research, school library use, or projects I have collaboration forms, which we fill out together (see figure 2).

The first three questions on the form are about the content teacher’s explanation of the lesson, standards, and outcome. Questions four and five are my contribution to standards, materials, student activities, and outcomes. I suggest Web 2.0 tools for student products. By showing students how to use innovative tools, the teachers learn to infuse technology. Often these suggestions...
for technology use are new to the teacher and lead me to provide one-to-one personal tutoring or I develop and present an in-service training session. As word travels through the departments about these opportunities, more teachers seek out collaboration.

The instruction in the school library matches the syllabus of the content area. Since classroom teachers are always present with their students, every session in the library can be a co-teaching experience. For example, the content teacher outlines the assignment for the students, and I explain how it will be carried out. Both of us monitor progress, give examples, direct learning, and reinforce the outcome rubric. With most teachers, this collaboration has become a seamless partnership. I know the students and their abilities, encourage and critique, and proofread student work along with the content teacher. Fortunately, I am not tied to the physical library because of space, bell schedules, or other constraints. I am able to go to classrooms to co-teach selected segments of lessons.

My ability to conduct research saves time for teachers. Instead of spending their evenings looking on the Web for reliable sources, they realize that I can find authoritative sites at the appropriate reading level. We are fortunate to have a few subscription databases, but when the topic needs websites, I create a links list, an online pathfinder, on my school library webpage. Each year, teachers ask me to work with their students on a lesson that has been successful in the past, and then more teachers from the same professional learning community (PLC) request the same resource support. As the standards, curriculum, and websites change, I am always in demand.

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<th>Collaborative Project Form</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prior to scheduling the lab, teachers must verify that all students have computer access.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TEACHER</strong></td>
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<td>1. <strong>Describe the portion of your lesson that utilizes computer research:</strong></td>
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<td>2. <strong>Student Objectives/State Standard:</strong></td>
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<td>4. <strong>Library Standard:</strong></td>
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<td>5. <strong>Student will use:</strong></td>
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<td>Software program or technology</td>
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> Please attach a roster of your class(es) to this form.
> Please attach a completed seating chart to this form.
> Teachers should inform their students of the library/computer rules and enforce all rules.
"Rather than spend hours and days searching the Web, Mrs. Kilker showed us how to conduct our research, modify the wording in our searches, and navigate other databases when we weren’t successful in our research. Her lessons provided us with a solid foundation for our research, which allowed for time saved, quality resources, and research skills that my students can carry with them for the rest of their lives."

— Carrie Deahl, English teacher

Connections and Collaboration Today

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

— Henry Ford

With a solid basis of leadership and collaboration, I have been fortunate to form great partnerships to advance student learning for all departments in the school. The Common Core Standards are a boon to school librarians. Curricula now specifically include research as a standard that students are to meet; school librarians have the skills to collaborate and teach to those standards while also teaching to AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner.

“Without her guidance, my students would not have the skills to complete class projects. Jean and I are always on the same page when it comes to student expectations.”

— Amanda Cooper, culinary arts teacher

Many collaborative efforts become sophisticated, worldly, and
multilayered. A colleague, Dixie Maxwell, the gifted program facilitator and National Honor Society (NHS) sponsor, and I firmly believe that we need to provide our inner-city students with as rich a curriculum as possible. We plan together as active thinkers to go beyond just the basics of what is required. Even small ideas mushroom. When we co-teach in the school library or in her classroom, the students benefit because we keep up a dialogue, adding layers of meaning and suggestions to our explanations and giving students multiple ideas to foster their critical thinking. For outside activities we are willing to share; we are willing to build on an idea. We share the responsibilities and the instruction. We include all students at all levels and from multiple teachers in any activity.

Kelley Jacobson’s special-needs students have technology standards and research projects that require them to learn about and use school library resources. Our planning includes looking at the standards and tasks that her students need to master, and determining which tools are available to meet students’ abilities. My questions to her involve my delivery of instruction. We analyze the lesson for pace and complexity. We discuss student attention, products, and success. To be an effective co–teacher is to also use teaching skills for every type of student in the school.

“...my students with disabilities [ranging from Mildly Mentally Retarded to Specific Learning Disability] use the library for learning skills that they will need now and as an adult. The librarian has been a collaborator to help my students learn the basic functions of a computer and also how they can use a computer to do their work. When we were in [the library] to learn about doing research, she used a variety of techniques to help them grasp the concept of citing the author. We used the computer, books, and manipulatives in order to make a difficult topic more understandable to my group of students.”

— Kelley Jacobson, special education teacher

School-Wide Programs and Community Connections
I organize several book programs during the school year. "The Big Read," a program of the National Endowment for the Arts, is locally hosted by a public entity. NEA provides teaching strategies and audio interviews each year; see <http://nea.gov>.
I sign up to receive free copies of the selected book, publicize the program, create lessons as needed, and seek co–teachers; Dixie works with the students to analyze the text. I plan field trips and follow-up activities such as book discussions or contests. For The Maltese Falcon we used school vans to take students to dinner and a screening of the old movie at our city’s renovated classic theater where viewers even dressed in costumes of the era. For Call of the Wild we took students to an art show, and then to a county library for a discussion and oral quiz competition; our students won. For Fahrenheit 451 we (including math teachers) took students to the art museum to meet the author of the graphic novel. The field trips that I plan are mostly in the evenings and on weekends because it is difficult to release students from school, but the teachers and I enjoy the activities, too. Through these activities we create excitement for reading.

“The community–librarian connection is key in promoting the arts. Mrs. Kilker's community partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts provides teachers with free resources and books for that year’s book of choice. Last year, my honors English students and I were given access to The Call of the Wild by Jack London, which allowed us to explore a well–loved classic and turned my students on to London’s other work, White Fang. Later in the year, some students chose a dog breed for their research project”

— Carrie Deahl, English teacher

I chair the teen selection committee for the Arizona Library Association’s Grand Canyon Reader’s Award books, which are the featured YA books of the year. When I first started this project, I introduced this list to my school through book talks to students and kept at it until word spread throughout the school about a great list of teen reads. Now the English teachers use the titles for suggested summer reading. I work with the teachers by explaining themes and giving lesson ideas.

OneBookAZ is a program that encourages everyone in the state to read the same book at the same time. Organized through the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, current selections have been chosen to celebrate Arizona’s Centennial; see <www.lib.az.us>.
Our exploration of the 2010 title, The Trunk Murderess: Winnie Ruth Judd by Jana Bommersbach, is an example of a multilayered collaboration. I received copies of the book, and several English teachers used it with their classes, plus I was able to put together a group of students in the
A co-teacher is expected to share in all aspects of students’ learning. To be a valued partner includes sharing the work that goes into effective teaching. The school librarian must be notable for teaching classes, preparing lessons, and working with students to an extent that matches the content teacher. Arranging the program for OneBookAZ is an example. While co-teaching classes all day, I also needed to prepare and organize the field trip, choose standards, create the introductory and follow-up lessons.

“The school-librarian—community connection is also key in building literacy. A librarian who attends local, state, and national meetings and conferences as professional development is the type of librarian I build a close relationship with. This librarian is an invaluable resource to the school site and community as he/she keeps students and faculty informed about public library events, changes in library hours, and updates in search engines, and literacy trends”

—Carrie Deahl, English teacher

Reaching beyond the school might just be reaching to a sister school. Our NHS forms “Reading Buddies” teams with an elementary school class. They read and write stories together when the elementary class visits the high school. I offered the school library for their culminating project. At first, I read to the first graders, but over the years my participation has evolved as I suggested ways to do more activities. Students have created puppet shows with library tables as the “stage.” We next tried shadow puppets with sheets stretched across the stacks and used an overhead projector for the light source. Now we are working on creating electronic communications between the students. The NHS students learn to read aloud and write carefully, and the elementary students learn that reading is a wonderful and engaging activity.

Reach Out

School librarians can always find opportunities to collaborate and enhance lessons. Brainstorm with colleagues, join committees and organizations outside of school, and do what we love best, read. I find connections through all of these. When I offered to build keypal correspondence for Dixie Maxwell’s language arts students who were studying Japan, I contacted Phoenix Sister Cities and found an American teacher in Japan. It was a fabulous adventure for our students to share superstitions with students in rural Japan.

“To increase student achievement, our eighteen English teachers actively work with Jean on a variety of collaborative endeavors to engage students as fully as possible. In addition to being directly involved in the planning and delivery of instruction, Jean creates enrichment opportunities by bringing authors to campus for book talks and creates partnerships with local universities to bring college students to campus to increase students’ creative writing skills”

—Alaina Adams, English Department chair

Just say “yes” at any opportunity. Teachers want great lessons for their students. They appreciate the support of the school librarian and the addition of more ideas through co-planning, and will promote the success of our collaborative work. In this era of school districts dropping librarian positions, my classroom teachers and specialist colleagues and I work extra hard to promote the school library.
and let our enthusiasm for student learning escalate. Connecting classrooms, school library, school, and community is one sure way to build instructional partnerships. Working together we achieve success!

Jean Kilker, NBPTS, is a teacher-librarian at Maryvale High School in Phoenix, Arizona. She also serves as cochair of the Teacher-Librarian Division, Arizona Library Association and as chair of City of Phoenix Public Library Advisory Board. She is the author of reading guides for Five Star Publishing titles, including Arizona Way Out West and Witty by Conrad J. Storad and Linda Exley is the ONEBookAZ for Kids for 2012.

Further Reading:


A recent graduate of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, School of Communication and Information, I was consistently reminded throughout my course of study that collaboration with other members of the school community, especially with other teachers, is a critical element to ensure instructional effectiveness and student achievement. At Rutgers, to prepare us to develop strategies to reach out to our school communities, a requirement of our school library management course was to share what we had learned about a critical or ethical school-library issue, and to demonstrate skills in preparing and presenting a workshop for the audience assigned to the topic selected. Then we had to present results to the class in our online discussions as well as through a PowerPoint presentation file with complete narration in the notes.

It was easy for me to select the topic I wanted to investigate as reading is one of the most important skills taught in schools today, and I know that one of a teacher’s main priorities with students is developing their skills for reading for comprehension and understanding. As a school librarian this is also a priority for me. A lot of research in the last few years has shown how we can all work together to benefit our students’ development in the area of reading comprehension. There are things that teachers can do in the classroom, things that I as the school librarian can do with students in the school library, and then things that classroom teachers and I can do together. In preparing for an in-service workshop, I knew I would be able to share and review some of this research, as well as many strategies and techniques that would be useful not only for students, but for teachers and for me as the school librarian, too.

Students are taught how to read at a very young age, but how well do the students understand what they are reading? Students are taught how to read the words on the paper, but do they comprehend what the words mean when used together? What can educators do to help students think critically and really understand what is being taught? Teachers and school librarians have the responsibility of encouraging students by showing them important strategies and techniques that will have them reading for comprehension and making connections to the world around them.
Again, through my investigation, I knew a significant body of research provides answers to these questions and shows how students’ academic performance improves when teachers and school librarians work together with the students. One technique that research shows to be very successful—one that I think should be used in every school—is the concept of “coteaching” in which the teacher and school librarian work together in the same environment to help students learn. If we, as school librarians and teachers, work together and “coteach” our students, they will benefit greatly, and we will be able to see constant and consistent growth as students move from grade to grade. While this article is focusing on coteaching for reading comprehension, this concept is successful when used for any subject, when it is cotaught by two professionals who have expertise with content (teacher), with process (school librarian), and with instructional design and delivery (both!).

**Reading Comprehension Strategies**

For the purposes of designing my workshop presentation, while I knew I wanted to provide focus on the benefits of “coteaching,” I determined that it would also be prudent to briefly explain the six strategies for comprehension that must be addressed when teaching students how to read for comprehension. Jamie McKenzie identifies these strategies as questioning, picturing, inferring, recalling prior knowledge, synthesizing, and flexing, and explains that “research into effective practice indicates that achievement of strong scores on comprehension tests is possible, but progress will require teaming across all classrooms so that students spend some time in each hour of each day acquiring, practicing and sharpening essential comprehension skills such as questioning, picturing, inferring, recalling past knowledge, synthesizing and flexing” (McKenzie 2005). McKenzie suggests that school librarians should lead this effort, and provide aid and comfort to teachers. Once the school librarian understands these strategies, he or she will be able to show teachers and other staff how to use them successfully.

So what are these strategies and how do they work? The first strategy is questioning. With this strategy, we should introduce young students to question types such as fact, thinking, and imagination questions. We
can also confront students with challenges that require question combinations and make the concepts of surprise and wonder a daily event (McKenzie 2005).

The next strategy is picturing. School librarians enjoy reading stories to younger students aloud, and having the students make connections and picture in their minds the characters and scenery. This reading aloud is a simple technique that we can bring into the classroom whenever possible to keep each student’s mind stimulated.

The next strategy is inferring. How can we show students how to read between the lines to find what is missed or implied? The teacher and school librarian need to first provide students with the chance to interpret material and create answers by considering the clues provided. We also need to lead them through the process by modeling how clues can be combined to create answers (McKenzie 2005).

In my opinion, the next strategy, recalling prior knowledge, is the most important when teaching students to comprehend what they are reading. With this strategy, students already have some knowledge about the topic, and are guided and encouraged to draw on that knowledge so they can build on it for a better understanding. “Much of what we already know lies hidden where it will do us little good when wrestling with a difficult comprehension passage, yet proficient readers are skilled at tapping into and reawakening these sources to cast light on whatever passages they are considering” (McKenzie 2005).

Synthesizing is the next strategy where we teach students to “mix, match, combine, and weave ideas into something new” (McKenzie 2005). This strategy is about problem solving and creating ways for students to practice and use their problem-solving skills—skills that will be very important throughout their lives.

The last strategy is flexing, which McKenzie explains is a “term that captures what others mean by metacognition and strategic choice. The proficient reader knows how to shift gears, change directions, try something different and run through a host of strategies until meaning evolves” (McKenzie 2005).

Some of these strategies are a lot harder to tackle than others, but all are equally important when helping students understand what is being taught.

Coteaching Reading Comprehension Strategies

In my workshop presentation, once I had made the evidence-based case for the use of best strategies, I needed to make a case for how we—teacher and school librarian—can move forward to ensure that these strategies are successfully implemented by all students. At this point I had an opportunity to segue to the need to incorporate coteaching and to discuss its rationale. While there are many different approaches to coteaching and many ways that students reap the benefits, the practice can be seen by teachers as time-consuming. School librarians need to recognize how stressed teachers are with everything that they have to get done during the school day, and while we are also under pressure, it is essential that we take the lead in adding coteaching to our colleagues’ practices. We can create lessons to be taught by the school librarian and the classroom teacher, either together or separately (teacher in the classroom and librarian in the school library), connecting with each other’s instructional objectives.

Again, teachers and school librarians can collaborate in numerous ways, but I presented for consideration three strategies because they are not only effective, but also easy to prepare and implement—a plus given the time constraints on teachers and school librarians.

· The first technique is called “one teaching/one supporting” and is exactly what it sounds like. One of the two will teach the lesson while the other will walk around the classroom and assist the students (Moreillon 2008). This technique helps keep the lesson moving forward while the supporter helps students who need further clarification on a certain aspect of the lesson.

· The next technique is called “parallel teaching.” The classroom teacher and school librarian each teach half of the students at the same time (Moreillon 2008). I like this technique because with many school districts facing budget woes, classrooms have larger numbers of students, and it is increasingly difficult to have one-on-one time with every student when needed. Parallel teaching allows for more interaction between the adult teaching the lesson and the students.

· The last technique is “team teaching” in which the classroom teacher and the school librarian share the responsibility of teaching the entire class start to finish (Moreillon 2008). Both the teacher and the school librarian are responsible for portions of the lesson, and they work together to make the lesson complete.

These are just a few examples of ways of encouraging coteaching by presenting the research and sharing
with teachers, through in-service opportunities, what the research tells us works. I believe that by seizing these opportunities we will make inroads in collaboration that will not only help students, but will help teachers and school librarians become better at what they do.

Collecting the Evidence

Through coteaching, we can also observe successful skills that our counterparts are using and begin using the skills ourselves. Likewise, through reflection and review of our performance and that of students, we can identify what is not working and together develop a new course of action. When we do this, we are using elements of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). Dr. Ross Todd, associate professor and director of the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) at Rutgers, states that EBP “is an approach that systematically engages research-derived evidence, school librarian-observed evidence, and user-reported evidence in the ongoing processes of decision making, development, and continuous improvement to achieve the school’s mission and goals. These goals typically center on student achievement and quality teaching and learning” (2008, 39).

Many school librarians and other education professionals use evidence-based practice to determine what is working during instructional time in the school library, what is not working, and how to improve on students’ learning. This assessment is important to the school librarian and teachers when it comes to students’ reading comprehension because the results validate that quality learning outcomes can be achieved through the school library program and that the school librarian is an important instructional partner (Ross 2008). School librarians are here to help students with reading comprehension, and this evidence of students’ improvement in reading comprehension shows everyone in the school, including the teachers, principal, and other staff members, one of the many reasons why the school librarian is so important. Many positive outcomes have resulted when school librarians work with teachers to teach students. Here are a few examples of what people have said when we all work together: “Students’ final products showed improved ability to analyze and synthesize information.” “Students’ research reports showed improved ability to draw conclusions and state implications of their findings.” “83% of one class showed ability in thoughtfully analyzing and evaluating major alternative points of view.” “Following instructional interventions that focused on establishing the quality of websites, 100% of the students’ bibliographies showed use of high quality sites” (Todd 2008, 43).

Teachers and school librarians have many helpful tools for instructing students, so imagine combining all of those tools when teaching students how to read and, more importantly, how to read critically. EBP helps us as educators determine what we are doing right and what needs to change to improve student learning. This research validates how important the school librarian is when it comes to reading, and also shows how school librarians can help teachers teach. By incorporating the strategies for comprehension, team teaching, and evidence-based practice, you can help the students at your school to succeed in ways we never considered!

I hope that every teacher and school librarian reading this article will think about coteaching, as well as consider the reading comprehension strategies as noted by Jamie McKenzie and how to incorporate these strategies to benefit student learning. I concluded my in-service presentation with an activity for teachers to think about questions similar to these: “What lessons do you currently teach to your students that would benefit from working together with another teacher or the school librarian?” “Would you consider team teaching with your coworkers?”

I hope you will think about these questions, too, and recognize that evidence-based practice helps us to provide proof positive to support coteaching and working together to help our students succeed.

Kerry Pierce Conklin is a School Librarian at Mayfield Intermediate School in Manassas City, VA. Kerry is a graduate of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, School of Communication and Information. She completed her MLIS degree requirements in 2011.

Works Cited:


A Collaborative Voyage for Junior Astronomers at Londonderry Middle School

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One of the benefits of working at the middle school level is the opportunity to work with colleagues in a variety of content areas; this not only makes our work more interesting, but offers a multidisciplinary approach to learning that ultimately benefits the students. In the Londonderry (NH) School District, collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians has been integral to the ongoing success of our district-wide library instructional program.

“Nurturing the Nature of Science,” an article co-written by Dr. Debby Chessin, professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Mississippi, was the catalyst to the development of a successful coteaching effort at Londonderry Middle School. According to Chessin, the characteristics of scientific knowledge included the concepts that “science is socially and culturally embedded and tends to be self-correcting as scientists critically review and analyze each other’s research” (Reeves, Chessin, and Chambless 2007, 31). The use of historical stories to help students understand the human component to science was an important concept in this article.

A desire to incorporate this model into a middle school classroom brought Dr. Chessin, Londonderry Middle School librarian Paula Chessin, and seventh-grade science teacher Jessica Payeur together in a collaborative effort that took place after a great deal of brainstorming back and forth via e-mail, phone conversations, and Skype sessions between two different time zones. We quickly established the importance of incorporating science curriculum, research skills, literacy skills, and technology; the more we planned the more excited we became about designing and implementing this multifaceted project.

**Description of Unit**

Astronomy was one of the seventh-grade science benchmarks, and we knew that the use of historical stories would fit nicely into this unit. We came up with the following instructional goals:

- Students would integrate and apply research, content, writing, and technology skills.
- Students would understand how astronomers work within a historical and cultural framework.
- Students would appreciate how scientific discoveries throughout history influenced astronomers and contributed to the modern space program.
- Student collaboration and teamwork would be an essential component to the success of this unit.

The students were invited to create either a magazine or a newspaper that would integrate all information gathered from a variety of print and online resources. The list of astronomers and other scientists the students could choose to study included Aristotle, Nicholas Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, Edmund Halley, Albert Einstein, Edwin Hubble, Wernher Von Braun, and Stephen

“If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

—Isaac Newton
Hawking. Each of these scientists engaged in research and observation that would someday contribute to the modern space program, and it was important for students to come away from this assignment understanding the impact of each scientist’s research on future generations of scientists. We also decided to add Christa McAuliffe to this list. As the first teacher in the NASA Teacher in Space program and a high school social studies teacher at Concord High School in Concord, New Hampshire, we felt she would be an important alternate choice for students here in McAuliffe’s home state.

To meet the instructional goals of this unit and to make sure students were given adequate time to use critical thinking skills such as analysis, application, synthesis, and evaluation, we devoted a full three weeks of instructional time to the unit’s implementation. This project merged the recently revised ICT (Information, Computer, and Technology) Benchmarks for the Londonderry School District and the New Hampshire Curriculum Framework Benchmarks for Science Education. The local ICT benchmarks had been revised to incorporate AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, the International Society for Technology in Education’s National Educational Technology Standards for Students and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills Frameworks. (To see our ICT benchmarks, go to <www.londonderry.org/assets/documents/curriculum/benchmarks_expanded.pdf>.)

**Timeline of Unit**

The major components of this project included library research, factual and creative writing skills, use of technology for research and desktop publishing, historic and scientific timeline creation, distance learning opportunities, and student reflection. These components were designed to facilitate students’ understanding of science concepts and of the nature and history of science, development of research processes and communication skills, and reflection on their work.

The timeline for this unit was developed as follows.

**Day 1:** The teaching team—Jessica Payeur, seventh-grade science teacher and Paula Chessin, school librarian—explained the nature and purpose of the assignments, provided corresponding assignment instructions and scoring rubrics (one for science content and one for research and writing), and discussed general expectations of cooperative-group classroom behavior. Students quickly realized that this unit would be more engaging and challenging than merely reading about an astronomer in a book and writing a report.

The class was divided into small groups of four or five students. We chose to use heterogeneous grouping strategies, and placed students with different interests and abilities together so that they could complement one another’s special skills and competencies. Best friends were separated because of the very social nature of our seventh-graders, and we hoped that students would learn to work with classmates they might not know well. Scientists and engineers work in this way at their jobs where communication, collaboration, and reaching consensus are vital parts of the process. It was important to provide this authentic working environment. The first decision that each group made was which scientist they would study in depth.

**Day 2–6:** Students met in the school library to begin the research process. We spoke about working effectively in their groups by either assigning individual research tasks to specific members of the group or working together each step of the way; part of their assignment was to discuss these approaches and make decisions that would work best for the success of their group. Each group received a research worksheet to complete that included space for the following:

- Biographical details of their scientist’s life, including birth dates, place of birth, family, and education
- Description of their scientist’s discoveries and research in the field of astronomy
- Forces that may have hindered the work of the scientist (political or religious constraints, for example)
- Important historical and cultural events during the lifetime of their scientist

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**Students quickly realized that this unit would be more engaging and challenging than merely reading about an astronomer in a book and writing a report.**
Students used a wide variety of print resources the first few days and then moved on to online resources for the remainder of the week. A Google Custom Search was created, which allowed the students to investigate over thirty websites, selected by their teachers, pertaining to their research. Students seemed to enjoy the fact that they were using the Google search engine but also searching relevant sites. Students were also encouraged to use several online subscription databases that would be helpful for their research. All databases and the Google Custom Search were available on the Londonderry Middle School Library Media Center webpage <http://schools.londonderry.org/lms/lmc> for students to use at school or at home. Not all of the required information was found in one particular area. One of the goals of using multiple sources was to encourage students to learn how to do research and evaluate materials.

Day 7: Students met back in the classroom to work with the Londonderry Middle School literacy coach who taught a lesson on writing for a magazine or newspaper. This lesson included writing styles, the different parts of a magazine and newspaper, and how to incorporate research into effective journalism. At the end of the lesson each group had to decide whether to create a newspaper or a magazine, and how to divide up the writing assignments. The literacy coach returned to the classroom at the end of the week to review and give feedback.

Day 8–12: Students began the creative process of synthesizing their research into a magazine or newspaper. A laptop mobile lab was brought into the classroom for the students to begin writing articles, editorials, obituaries, advertisements (based on the time period of their scientist), and entertainment columns. Students also worked with the seventh-grade computer education teacher in the computer lab to design the covers of their magazine or newspaper. PowerPoint was used to create magazine covers and newspaper banners; Microsoft Publisher or Microsoft Word was used to create content.

Day 13–14: Students finished up their projects and presented in class. The first year we did this unit, we used videoconferencing equipment so students could share with Dr. Chessin as well as with their teachers and peers. After the presentations, students asked Dr. Chessin questions about the Hubble space telescope and other more recent astronomical events including the “de-planeting” of Pluto. This was an excellent opportunity to discuss the ever-changing nature of science and the reality that, as we gain more knowledge through the use of increasingly sophisticated technology, we “tweak” or even revise the way we classify objects.

Student Reflection and Assessment

Students’ reflection comments provided us with valuable information about how they preferred to learn the material. The majority of students remarked that they worked hard as a collaborative team to complete the project. We did note that one or two groups complained that one
FIGURE 1: Space and Time for Astronomers — Science Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name ____________________________</th>
<th>Period ____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science Requirements</td>
<td>Science Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 All science requirements included.</td>
<td>Science information is accurate and up to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Missing one science requirement; all others are included.</td>
<td>Science information is accurate and up to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Missing no more than 3 science requirements; all others are included.</td>
<td>Errors in data are minimal or out of data in a few areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Missing more than 3 science requirements.</td>
<td>There are many errors in data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 2: Space and Time for Astronomers — Research and Writing Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name ____________________________</th>
<th>Period ____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Time Effectively</td>
<td>Locating Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Student made effective use of library time and was on task at all times.</td>
<td>Student evaluated and used a wide variety of relevant resources, both print and online to meet information needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Student worked during the class period and completed the tasks.</td>
<td>Student used a variety of relevant information resources, both print an online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Student was not focused on task and needed guidance.</td>
<td>Student needed guidance to locate relevant information and did not use a variety of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Student did not make effective use of library time and did not complete task.</td>
<td>Student did not locate relevant information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCORES: 4=Exemplary / 3=Proficient / 2=Needs Improvement / 1=Unsatisfactory

TOTAL SCORE __________

© 2010 Londonderry School District. Figure 1. Research and writing rubric. | Figure 2. Science content rubric.

As mentioned in the timeline of this unit, two rubrics were distributed to students when this lesson was introduced on the first day. It was important for students to understand what the expectations were in all areas of this multidisciplinary project, and we wanted to give students the opportunity to succeed at the highest level. The research and writing rubric (see figure 2) outlined time management, resource evaluation, organization and recording of information, using information responsibly, and communicating knowledge through writing. The science rubric (see figure 1) detailed the science requirements, science content, spelling/grammar, and neatness.
We really enjoyed working together as a teaching team. We experienced a high level of professional enthusiasm that we hope transferred to the students. The combined expertise of a school librarian, a science teacher, a literacy coach, a computer educator, and a university professor contributed to an enhanced student-learning opportunity for this group of seventh-graders. This unit also provided excellent opportunities for our professional growth and development. We were able to share this project with our colleagues around the state at the annual Christa McAuliffe Technology Conference in New Hampshire in 2009, and in the following year we did a presentation at the National Science Teachers Association conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, giving us further opportunities for feedback and discussion.

We were fortunate to have the necessary administrative support from our building principal, and at the district level we had the support of the director of library media and technology services and of the assistant superintendent. The school librarian was awarded the New Hampshire School Library Media Association Collaboration Award in 2009 after being nominated by her building principal for the successful implementation of this science project. He stated that “This project met or exceeded the learning expectations for students by presenting them with an inquiry-based authentic learning experience which incorporated information literacy, science content, writing and technology.”

This lesson provided our students with an opportunity to engage in such 21st-century learning skills as cooperation and collaboration, technology integration, and critical and creative thinking. We believe this model of employing biographies to teach the nature and evolution of a specific content area could easily be adapted to many other subjects and content areas. And, as expressed through the Toy Story character Buzz Lightyear, this project could bring your students “to infinity…. and beyond!”

**Paula Chessin** is a school librarian at Londonderry (NH) Middle School. The Londonderry District is a past recipient of AASL’s National School Library Program of the Year. She has presented at AASL’s National Conference and also at the National Science Teachers Association conference and the Christa McAuliffe Technology Conference. In 2009 she received the New Hampshire School Library Media Association Collaboration Award.

**Jessica Payeur** is a seventh-grade science teacher at Londonderry (NH) Middle School. She has presented at the National Science Teachers Association conference and the Christa McAuliffe Technology Conference.

**Deborah Chessin** is an associate professor in science education and curriculum at the University of Mississippi and is active in numerous science professional organizations, in research and publication, and in educational outreach.

**Works Cited:**

New Canaan, Connecticut, is a community of approximately twenty thousand residents, located fifty miles northeast of New York City. It was ranked second in the nation as an education town within its demographic category, according to Schools.org.

In 2005 the high school rolled out an interdisciplinary project with freshmen health teachers to embed traditional library benchmarks (using the online public-access catalog (OPAC) and citing sources) into curricular learning. Since every freshman was matriculated in a health class in the first semester, it seemed logical to use the course as a vehicle toward that objective.

Since then, "My Personal Wellness" (MPW) has evolved into a rigorous and relevant 21st-century, differentiated learning activity. It provides students with an engaging, authentic learning experience allowing them to apply their knowledge of comprehensive wellness, as it relates specifically to physical health.

In a nutshell, students reflect on their personal wellness, and then track and analyze their nutrition and physical fitness using <www.choosemyplate.gov>. They chart results using spreadsheet software, write essential questions and a thesis statement, and design a personal website (in Google Sites) for communication and assessment. Students participate in an inquiry-based research process using a variety of appropriate informational resources, read critically, create an annotated bibliography, and write a wellness plan.

MPW includes "high-yield instruction strategies" (Marzano 2006, 2), defined high expectations for all, ongoing assessment and constructive feedback, gradual
release of responsibility, and the integration of digital technologies. As a result, student achievement has improved dramatically with 80 percent of students in 2010 receiving the maximum points on the rubric (4 points—excellence/advance) for research, reading, and annotated bibliography, and 99.53 percent of students meeting goals (see figure 1).

MPW affects the way students view wellness, nutrition, physical fitness, reading, research, communication, and technology. Because this is a student-centered project, close to 90 percent of the students surveyed responded positively about it and thought it would improve their personal wellness, as well as their research and literacy skills.

**Technology Tools Integration to Support MPW**

School librarians partner with health teachers and technology integration teachers over the course of sixteen weeks. The team uses a blended (online and face-to-face) approach to instruction. We use Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) as the instructional platform. This virtual content-delivery environment allows for 24–7 access to online tutorials, links, Google forms, checklists, course documents, and the Moodle Forum module where students can post questions and collaborate. The team offers “complex instruction tasks that call on a much wider range of intellectual skills, such as generating ideas, asking probing questions...expressing ideas, hypothesizing or planning” (Tomlinson 1999, 69). Students become critical thinkers and problem solvers—as well as lifelong learners—due to this real-world, inquiry approach to learning.

Because Moodle is open-source, we are able to embed learning resources with ease. For instance, we embed a Google calendar into the course. While this may seem like a basic function, it is a critical resource to support student self-direction. At our high school we have an eight-day rotating schedule, and health classes meet three times in that cycle, but not necessarily every other day. Factor in different meeting places (class or lab), and expectations about preparedness and homework that hinge on the lesson number in a sequence of twenty-five, and students quickly become confused. This calendar is their lifeline to knowing the what, when, and where for this course. We embed the teacher name, period and day the class meets, the class section number, the lesson number (out of the twenty-five in the instructional unit), and the meeting place for all six hundred class meetings during the unit.

Video tutorials are instrumental in helping to deliver differentiated instruction. While we have recognized for some time the effectiveness of video tutorials, we have observed learners consuming instruction differently as they use them. Some stream the entire video from beginning to end before doing what is asked. Others independently chunk their tasks into more easily processed pieces. They watch, stop, and apply instructional concepts before proceeding. Some students secure a supplemental learning device—usually an iPod—from the school library or their backpacks and use that to multitask watching and learning, while others split or tile their computer screen into two windows to do the same. Many refer to the videos more than once, whether from school or home, to review lessons.

We use multiple tools for video production, and our list is in constant flux. We film with iPods and phones. SMART Notebook software (free) allows us to demonstrate search strategies, editing, and form completion, just as we would in a face-to-face instructional setting. ScreenFlow software simultaneously captures two film timelines: one of the speakers through the computer’s webcam and another of the computer screencast. It is available only for iOS platforms, but
Camtasia Studio does the same thing for Windows users. While these capture products are expensive, many free screen casting tools are available; they range from the very simple (Screenr) to the sophisticated (Jing). We’ve had great success screen casting Prezi presentations and overlaying audio recordings to narrate lessons. Now that SlideRocket is a part of the Google Apps for Education suite, it is sure to become a resource in our visual-instruction toolbox. These resources help diversify our presentations. We’ve produced and published close to one hundred videos over the years. It is important to give each video its own look and feel, otherwise students will resist watching, thinking they’ve already seen it. We post our tutorials on YouTube and Vimeo—YouTube for access at a site familiar to students and Vimeo for quality.

Collaborative Planning, Implementation, and Assessment

The project’s enduring understandings (EU) and essential questions engage students in higher-order thinking skills (HOTS):

- How do I live a balanced and healthy life?
- What is wellness?
- How can I use Information Communication and Technologies (ICT) resources to select, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, record, and communicate information and data?
- How do I read critically?

These essential questions guide our roles and goals as collaborators.

The health teachers’ role is to provide the information on nutrition, physical fitness, and overall wellness. We zeroed in on five areas of nutrition: dietary fiber, fats and cholesterol, sodium intake, calcium, and vitamins A and C. We also give students a choice to further personalize their health interests by allowing them to select any other areas of nutrition or fitness that best address their wellness needs. Our goal is to have the student’s website be relevant to his or her needs. The website is a tool to support making healthy decisions and to set lifelong goals for overall wellness.

The foundations of wellness taught include: the wellness continuum, the six dimensions of wellness, the six basic nutrients and the basic food groups, nutrition labels, calories, a fitness assessment, the FITT (Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type) principle of exercise, health-conscious decision making, and setting S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timely) goals for wellness.

The technology integration faculty embeds technology, teaching students how to construct websites, and to use Google applications and productivity tools. Students incorporate spreadsheets, graphs, and documents, insert JPEGs, and design nonlinguistic representations of the six dimensions of wellness.

School librarians integrate, teach, and assess the information-search process, critical-reading strategies, and evaluative annotated bibliography writing. School librarians also demonstrate how to evaluate a resource for currency, relevancy, authority, accuracy, and purpose (CRAAP test), model the ethical use of information, design interactive instructional tools for the gradual release of responsibility model, and act as community partners with the United States Department of Agriculture. In essence, school librarians inculcate information, digital, and media literacy during students’ work on MPW.

Team decision making is essential for student success. Involved collaborating faculty members meet frequently during the semester to analyze assessment data and modify instruction. We debrief at the end of the project to address what went well, what could have gone better, organizational needs, and implications for the future. We also meet over the summer. We apply for summer curriculum stipends to modify the Understanding by Design unit plan; enhance learning activities and tutorials; revise the student survey; and

AASL’s School Libraries Count! Annual Survey

Now more than ever the collection and use of data to demonstrate a school library program’s role in student achievement is critical. By participating in AASL’s School Libraries Count! annual survey you are not only helping AASL collect longitudinal data for the profession but you are also capturing your school library program’s data that can then be compared to like schools within your state. Only school libraries that participate can assess their own personalized reports which pull other schools in the same level and size within your state for comparison reporting. Don’t miss out on this invaluable tool! Please fill out your survey by Friday, March 30th at www.aaslsurvey.org.

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tweak the rubric and assessments tools such as pre-test and post-test, the peer-to-peer evaluation and assessment documents, checklists, and self-reflections.

Collaboration, as we all know, is hard work. It takes time, a commitment to the process, and resources. It also takes a shared vision of 21st-century learning, mutual trust, ongoing communication, purposeful planning, and parity. At New Canaan High School (NCHS), we have a successful collaboration model in “My Personal Wellness.” It emphasizes key aspects of AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills framework, and the Common Core State Standards.

Meaningful Learning, Positive Student Outcomes

Students begin their work on this unit by assessing their own wellness in a writing exercise. Their self-reflection is guided by a series of class discussions on health and its components, as well as by presentations by support-servicing faculty and community-outreach professionals. At the end of MPW, students write a wellness plan to guide their future choices for improvement and for optimum health.

We believe the quality and depth of this substantive, student-centered project is due to collaboration and expertise of seven teachers from three disciplines who work well together, are eager to revise material when necessary, and share a mutual respect for one another’s disciplines and fields of expertise.

Students are valued members of the NCHS collaborative team. Their input significantly contributes to this project’s ongoing success and evolution. Feedback is collected via conferencing, the Moodle forum, reflections, and the end-of-project questionnaire. Students are surveyed on every component of the project and are asked to write about the experience. This data is carefully analyzed, and it guides project modification and revision.

Student reflections are consistently perceptive and insightful. When asked to reflect upon what they learned from the project, students have said:

“Personal wellness comes from a balance of all aspects in your life.”

“1. I learned what an annotated bibliography was. 2. I learned all the plagiarism rules. 3. I learned how companies hide calories. 4. I learned to do more things on my own.”

“This project has majorly affected my outlook on nutrition and fitness in a number of different ways. To begin, this project has led me to read articles that I never thought I would have been reading…”

“I learned how to create a website…do a bibliography and what the six dimensions of wellness are and how to apply them to my life.”

“This project has changed my outlook on nutrition very much. I used to think I was eating just fine, and I didn’t really need to change anything. However, after tracking our diets on My Pyramid tracker I realize I need to eat much better. Also, that nutrition and fitness go hand in hand. If I want to be physically well, I need to not only exercise a lot, but I also need to eat healthy as well.”

A collaborative environment yields better learning outcomes, student independence, and the transfer of enduring understandings. Collaboration begins with and ends with students.

Christina Russo is a STEM librarian at New Canaan (CT) High School.

Michelle Luhtala is department chair of the New Canaan (CT) High School library, an AASL board member, and an advocate for free-range media and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies in K–12 learning. She blogs about this and other innovative educational practices at <Bibliotech.me>.

Donna Sapienza is a health teacher, and a career and technology education teacher at New Canaan (CT) High School.

Works Cited and Recommended Resource:


Our planning for collaboration began during the early summer as we—Tidwell Middle School science teacher (ST) Angela Norton and school librarian (SL) Gloria Voutos—went our separate ways: one to a science staff-development event and the other to an intervention workshop entitled “Effective Instruction for Middle School Students.” When we reconnected on campus in August, the first thing we talked about was that Angela had been instructed to conduct a “research” unit, and the presenter told the teachers the unit was to be taught in collaboration with their school librarian. Gloria was also bursting with excitement to share that her workshop, normally attended by mostly language arts teachers, was filled with many science and math teachers. She noted that it was very interesting to learn from their perspective and see how all educators share some similar underlying concerns for students.

Immediately, our informal talks set us on the path of collaboration. We browsed the shelves, located resources, created materials, and began to plan. By the time the new school year began, we found ourselves with another partner, science teacher Wes Dunbar—and then there were three! Angela and Wes are the classroom teachers every school librarian dreams of—innovators, risk-takers, and fearless, so combined with the support of a true instructional leader, our principal Shane Conklin, our triumvirate had all the necessary elements for instructional transformation.

In the Northwest Independent School District (ISD) located in north Texas, collaboration is not optional; it is expected from all teachers. The driving force behind this effort is the district’s vision: “the best and most sought-after school district where every student is future ready: Ready for college, Ready for the global workplace, Ready for personal
success.” Gloria expands this statement for our students with a further challenge, “I know you can get into college. My question is can you stay and successfully complete your goals with the tools I am providing you? Mrs. Norton, Mr. Dunbar, and I are all about sustainability and Principal Conklin is our biggest supporter. He provides us with the leadership, guidance and encouragement we need to reach and surpass our challenges. He told us at the beginning of school year that data ‘is what it is; all the teachers are leaders and professionals in their fields here and we are going to focus on the value added component—how much can our students grow? On our campus, education is not a gamble, and students are not ‘lucky’ to be in specific classroom.’ ”

As collaborators, teachers know what is expected and have the tools to tap the potential for all students; the school library is the intellectual hub of the school and the school librarian strives to be the binding agent. Gloria is rapidly becoming the catalyst on which all teachers rely to provide resources, add depth to lessons, and step-by-step guidance through the entire planning, implementation, and assessment process. While some campuses are still experimenting with the degree of involvement, our team takes an "all in" approach—one we have candidly dubbed, the "no-fear factor." From its inception, the collaborative process that Northwest ISD fosters is one where the school librarian is an instructional partner who fuels collaboration with endless positive energy and bountiful intellectual curiosity. At Tidwell Middle School, we are not afraid of making an instructional mistake because we are coteaching and can feel assured that one of us will catch an error. In addition, we view mistakes as opportunities for making improvements. Throughout the process, we reflect on the lesson, evaluate student progress (value added), and make instructional adjustments where needed. This article presents our latest ongoing collaboration.

Research Cycle

“Research Cycle” is a series of six collaborative lessons spread throughout the school year and embedded in the already-established curriculum. Because multiple models for the research process have been published, and as many approaches to teaching research from the library standpoint, creating a strategy to make the lessons applicable to our students was our main challenge. In five years as a school librarian and fifteen as an educator, Gloria has provided instruction with Michael B. Eisenberg and Robert E. Berkowitz’s Big6 Model, Carol C. Kuhlthau’s updated Guided Inquiry, and many others. Gloria follows several blogs and avidly reads professional publications dealing with the topic of collaboration and shares with colleagues (often over doughnuts and coffee) information about the latest tools and methods to enhance critical inquiry in classrooms.
For sixth-grade science, we wanted to shape the research lessons to meet the needs of our curriculum. We decided to establish a research strategy that our students could also use in other subject areas. Even though the main collaboration was initiated in the science classroom, we created a simple sequence that conforms perfectly with the predominant ideas for every six-week cycle across the curriculum. Another advantage of the research strategy is that the lessons can be embedded at several points throughout the year. Thus, the key concept for teachers to understand is which piece do we use and when? The answer to that question can be determined only by the needs of each campus; this is not a "one-size fits all" solution, but a flexible collaboration strategy (see figure 1). This is how we did it.

**Lesson Planning Strategy**

The first step was to establish the exact objective we needed to achieve. This part of collaboration was done mostly through e-mail. One of the STs e-mailed to the SL the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge Skill) and the specific student expectation that became our main objective. Our first lesson centered on the topic of "elements." We wanted to get the students started in determining research topics so we planned a day in the school library when both science teachers (Angela and Wes) came in with classes. We divided the students into three main groups: "metals," "non-metals," and "metalloids."

After an integrated review of what had been discussed in the classroom by both teachers, the SL jumped into the discussion and asked students what were some of the characteristics of their elements based on their physical properties—specifically their appearance, luster, and malleability. The students were really surprised because they did not expect to see the three of us teaching together and exchanging comments throughout the school library!

At the end of this lesson, each student had a book or a hardcopy of an article on his or her assigned element, and had completed a table with the element and the description in terms of its appearance, luster, and malleability. Of course, we asked the students to cite their sources. While this activity marked the end of our first collaboratively taught lesson, it also marked the beginning of our partnership.

**Evaluating the Learning**

To evaluate instruction, determine student growth, and make instructional adjustments, teachers in the Northwest ISD give students common assessments developed by educators collaborating at the district level. After the assessments, teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators sit together and plan the next steps. After reviewing the assessment results with both science teachers, we began to chart our next collaboration. Some of the classes needed more experiences in specific content (science vocabulary development), other classes seemed well underway to a project-based lesson. Again, we
connected through e-mail and informal hallway conversations, and the next lesson took shape: “evaluating resources” and “ethical practices” in research. For the classes that needed more experience using the scientific terminology, this was a natural fit; for the advanced classes, the “ethical practice” lesson posed a new challenge, namely extending their research into debating points and counterpoints with clear evidence.

The topic for the next six-week cycle centered on “energy.” When we developed this collaboration we focused on accessing multiple resources that provided several points of view on the use of energy; resources included books, database articles, agency websites, and videos. Angela and Wes spent time looking at several books and finding the right “clips” from our video resources, while Gloria searched in different databases to extract the best articles needed for the lesson. This time, the students were not asked to find the resources by themselves. We constructed a model for them (which was delivered through a PowerPoint presentation) because our focus was on evaluating the diverse resources and applying ethical principles of research through correct in-text citation and verbal arguments.

The lesson took place in the classroom. When we decided on the location, it seemed like the natural progression in our coteaching and collaborative strategy. The day the SL went into the classroom, the students were even more surprised than they had been when she cotaught science in the school library. During each period after an initial warm-up activity and introduction by the classroom teacher, the SL began with a “welcome ME to your classroom...” and the kids cheered each time! The teachers reviewed the concepts with a short presentation and we immediately dug into the theme at hand: “Why should we cite our resources?” It was spirited to say the least! Our topic for this research was “What type of energy is best for a community in North Texas?” As always, students would need to justify their conclusions!

As we tag-teamed through our discussion, Angela and Wes made it clear that researchers are often tempted to cut corners and end up compromising important findings, their careers, and the field of science. The students were amazed when Wes described how his wife, a researcher with the federal government, had her work plagiarized by another scientist within the same agency, and Wes’s wife had to go through the taxing process of proving her research all over again. He concluded his remarks with a compelling, “You often hear about the consequences violators face when stealing information. I want you to keep in mind what the unethical practice does to the other side too.” The speech was powerful!

To evaluate this project, the students debated in the classroom, turned in a group presentation, included their vocabulary activities, and created a classroom mural that illustrated several types of energy. During our reflection, we saw more citations added, but the best part, especially for the SL, is that the number of students stopping her in the hall to ask how to cite a website, database, or news article has grown!

We are now working on putting together a way for students to create working citations without the online generators. We want them to look behind the scenes so they can lose the fear in using all types of sources for their projects in an ethical and academic way.

Next Steps
As we move to close the first semester, we are looking into the next fifteen weeks of instruction and considering how we are going to embed more of the research process to expand the students’ horizons and light the spirit of inquiry in each one of our sixth-graders. One of our goals is to create more interactive lessons where students lead the discussion through videos, chats, blogs, and RSS feeds, and make those resources available through our e-platform netSchool <http://moodle.nisdtx.org>.

Certainly, all these benchmarks will need to be achieved as other challenges emerge. In Texas teachers are anticipating the impact of an accountability system that will include the new state assessment STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) and more correlations to the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards. Across the nation, teachers will be looking at their own state assessments and foundational principles influenced by new standards, such as the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association.

The students are used to seeing all of us together, and they truly embrace our professional and personal connections.
**Strategy Application**

Angela, Wesley, and Gloria have shared collaborative strategies at the campus and district levels. As we move forward, we aim to present some of our experiences with educators at the state and national levels, and beyond. However, we are often asked how teachers and school librarians in non-collaborative environments can initiate the process? Where does one start when the culture in the district or the school has relegated school librarians to peripheral or marginalized roles?

Angela suggests that teachers approach the school librarian with “a specific focus and products.” The starting point is often daunting, and some teachers almost fear the proverbial “research units” with lessons taught in isolation and skills exercised with total disconnect from classroom content, despite the fact that teaching core content is where teachers would most like to have help. Furthermore, research at some buildings has become so prescriptive that students and teachers dread the drawn-out lectures on “search, cite, or be destroyed.”

Wes explains, “The interaction between the school librarian and the classroom teacher makes all the difference. When students see the excitement in both educators, they cannot help but be excited as well!” It is true. After each period’s group leaves the classroom or school library, we all step into the hallway, high-five all around, monitor students, get back in the classroom, and start all over again! The students are used to seeing all of us together, and they truly embrace our professional and personal connections.

“Get connected with your principals,” Shane Conklin advises. “They know the teacher–librarian is there, and they want to see more; but it is inherent in librarians to take some of the first steps as well.” At our staff meetings, our principal Shane opens the session with “celebrations.” Staff members jockey for positions to celebrate academic successes, personal achievements, and recognize one another’s accomplishments. These sessions are constructive, often evaluating a piece of recent literature in a journal or professional magazine, sharing teaching strategies, evaluating materials, and charting new collaborative work. Sharing ideas during staff meetings can lay the foundation for new partnerships; someone is listening!

Finally, we all have to understand and internalize the reality that collaboration does not happen by chance. It is hard work, and it is our responsibility as educators and leaders in the field of information science. Collaboration is a purposeful exercise of your intellectual value, your professional expertise, and your ability to share specific knowledge across grade levels and curricula. Collaboration and coteaching involves planning, finding resources, developing lessons and interventions, grading, analyzing scores, and then going back to the starting point again. So, lose the fear! Collaboratively plan, coteach, embed yourself in meetings at all levels, and see how many partners begin knocking at your door begging for more!

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**Works Cited:**


Collaboration on McNair Middle School’s Independent Study Offers Fresh Skills for Gifted Students
Each year in late January we connect to look at the calendar to schedule time for the seventh-grade gifted and talented (GT) students to come to the school library to begin their annual Independent Study. “Independent study is a planned research process that (a) is self-directed; (b) is similar to one used by a practicing professional or is authentic to the discipline; (c) is facilitated and monitored by the teacher; and (d) focuses on lifelike problems that go beyond the regular class setting” (Johnsen and Goree 2005, 5).

When McNair Middle School opened in 2000, we discovered that we share the same birthday, and we have since learned that we also share many interests and attributes, including a passion for guiding students to successful learning experiences. Because our school library program operates on a completely flexible schedule, we have been able to engage in meaningful collaboration, planning, and coteaching to influence the effectiveness of this project through continuous improvement.

Over the years, the focus and final product of the assignment has followed a variety of different avenues. Currently, students choose to investigate and pursue an activity or area of interest with the goal of learning to do something completely new. On the surface, this sounds like a fun project that the students will approach with enthusiasm, but the initial step requiring topic selection and establishing focus demonstrates the rigor of the process and tasks to come. Many students soon discover that this initial stage is the most difficult portion of the assignment.

Selecting a Topic
The collaboration of GT teacher and school librarian is most involved in the early stages of the Independent Study process. Before we introduce this assignment in class, students take a survey about hobbies, skills, and interests at which they are proficient or about which they have background knowledge. Doing this before asking students to choose something “new” will prevent them from selecting an area of interest that otherwise might be too familiar or easy to meet project requirements. Following this activity, students come to the school library for a lesson and demonstration of the resources that may be useful in topic selection. We place emphasis on the importance of determining that sufficient resources will be available to support their choices before they commit to a topic of study.

Getting Started
The lesson we present to the class allows us to model or demonstrate the process they will use to help consider possibilities for their Independent Study. All students must determine topics that meet these criteria prior to securing Vanessa’s approval.

- Students must find adequate and reliable resources to complete a report on the history of the topic.
- Students must locate and interview an expert on the topic.
- Students must agree to put forth the effort to learn, practice, and demonstrate their newly acquired skills.

The timeline for completing the Independent Study is six weeks. Weekly class periods in three-hour blocks give students time to work on reading, researching, interviewing, practicing, and completing their projects in the school day. Most topics, however, will require significant time outside of class, as well (see figure 1).

Examples of Independent Study Topics

- Animation
- Archery
- Balloon animals
- Bridge (card game)
- Cake decorating
- Cheese making
- Chinese yo-yo
- Clay animation
- Embroidery
- Fencing
- Fly tying (fishing)
- Flower arranging
- Golf
- Graffiti art
- Hair cutting
- Henna tattooing
- Indian Sign Language (North American)
- Juggling
- Knitting
- Knot tying
- Languages (spoken)
- Mahjong (game)
- Makeup application
- Martial arts
- Musical instrument
- Origami
- Painting (art)
- Ping Pong
- Salsa dancing
- Sewing
- Sign Language (ASL)
- Tarot card reading
- Tie dying
- Website design
- Yo-yoing
- Yoga

Figure 1. Examples of independent study topics.
Modeling the Process
When the class takes place in the school library, Sarah is lead teacher. Since we have planned together what material to cover, it is customary for us to maintain a dialogue the entire time. While cueing to jog one another’s memory, asking hypothetical questions, and occasionally bursting into song, we engage the students in a lively and somewhat informal lesson. With a computer and projector, we demonstrate how to explore a potential topic. Using the tried and true topic of kite-making, Sarah begins with the online public access catalog to search for books in our collection. Later in the class period, students will have plenty of time to browse a selection of nonfiction books on a variety of topics to begin generating possible ideas.

Because the Fayetteville Public School District library program maintains a union catalog <http://falcon.fayar.net>, McNair students also have access via interlibrary loan to the books and materials in other district libraries. Links to other library catalogs such as the Fayetteville Public Library, University of Arkansas Library, and Washington County Library System are included on our school library webpage. As Sarah demonstrates keyword and subject searching, Vanessa reminds students that they may borrow items from these libraries through ILL, as well.

Next, we focus on the variety of subscription databases available for students and point out some of the benefits of using these resources vs. Web searching. Vanessa reminds students that they are required to provide a list of works cited with their final written reports. Sarah then emphasizes the inclusion of readily available citations within the articles in databases. Being realists, however, we know that students will first begin their exploration using Google or Bing, so we review the essential need to evaluate websites for accuracy, currency, and authority, and the importance of choosing precise keywords and related terms.

Placing emphasis on and guiding students through the thought processes involved in choosing whether to include a potential resource is one area we intend to include as an additional requirement in the Independent Study assignment for 2012. “If students evaluate their sources early, they will avoid a crisis later. If they do not find enough information, they should be allowed to change topics. If they conclude that they have enough information, they cannot use lack of information as an excuse later” (Rankin 1999, 90).

Cite It When You Write It!
The final component of this class session is the distribution of an adapted version of the MLA Secondary Citation Worksheet for the Seventh Edition that was obtained from the Oregon School Library Information System (OSLIS) website. OSLIS is a project of the Oregon School Library Association in partnership with the Oregon State Library, and supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act. For several years, hundreds of McNair Middle School students have used a link to the Oregon Citation Maker <http://cm.oslis.org>. This tool is easy for novice bibliographers to use and provides templates for the most frequently cited types of sources used by secondary students; it does not require a subscription or include advertisements (see figure 2).

In the past, Sarah has demonstrated the use of Citation Maker by going through the process of creating a citation for a website. This year, she plans to have sample worksheets and have students practice gathering the information and creating several types of citations. Even though they have had instruction in sixth grade and during the first semester of seventh grade, we know that giving credit to sources of information in a specified format is still a difficult skill for middle school students to understand and apply.

Locating an Expert
One component of the project is to use the expertise of a human resource to learn the new skill. The challenge of locating an expert seems to trouble students in the beginning and cause them to consider limiting their options to adults that they already know. We have had great success finding potential experts in our area, especially with using the University of Arkansas faculty website <http://experts.uark.edu>. Teachers in our school have also willingly served as experts, and we encourage students to begin networking with family members or friends of family members.

Occasionally cold-searching on the Web yields potential contacts, and Vanessa monitors the contact using her faculty e-mail address or the telephone in the classroom. Students have the rare experience of using the yellow pages section of an ancient artifact, the telephone book, and practice choosing more broad or narrow keywords to locate possible contacts. Speaking to adults on the phone using appropriate courtesy and conversation techniques allows students to make contacts in a closely supervised environment.
Completing the Independent Study

University of Connecticut professor Del Siegle described the independent study option as "one viable means of meeting the needs of many students. It affords students an opportunity to expand their understanding of specific disciplines through self-directed inquiry under the guidance of adults with similar interests" (1998). During the six weeks that follow the initial school library visit, students work on their individual topics during their weekly three-hour GT block (see figure 3). This time may be used to read articles, compile the histories of their topics, practice new skills, contact experts, and conduct interviews. Frequent conferencing takes place between students and Vanessa to assess progress and plan how to best present or demonstrate their new learning. Students are encouraged to visit the school library frequently to consult with Sarah about resources and for guidance when creating their citations.

Time for Reflection

The final section of the Independent Study report is the student’s personal reflection. Throughout the school year, students have had multiple opportunities to learn about and discuss sixteen attributes referred to as “Habits of Mind” and described as “characteristics of what intelligent people do when they are confronted with problems, the resolution to which are not immediately apparent” (Costa and Kallick 2008). The comments from students include references to these attributes as well as honest assessments of their personal work habits.

For example, E.J. chose to learn American Sign Language and found it difficult to remember what she had already taught herself. By applying the habits of mind to her studying, she was able to overcome her forgetfulness. “The habit of mind I applied the most was creating, innovating and imagining. I was able to create an image in my head of the pictures and demonstrations that went along with the individual signs.” Caroline, who elected to study the art of henna tattooing, noted that, “I learned something about myself during this project; if I really set my mind on something, I can accomplish anything.” She indicated that the habit of mind she used most was persisting. Paulina, the child of Taiwanese parents, elected to learn their native language for her Independent Study. She too applied the persisting habit of mind, as well as thinking flexibly, and questioning and posing problems. Describing herself as “extremely lazy” and “not proud of that,” Paulina said, “The rewards are great” when accomplishing something difficult. Tony chose to create a film by using clay figures and stop-motion animation. He described his Independent Study experience as “one of the most fun and interesting things I’ve done since I’ve been in school.” He went on to declare that he had surprised himself with the realization that he had so much patience when working on something that he found to be of

We have learned that this is such a fun project, especially when the students become excited about receiving e-mails and calls, and have “Wow” and “Aha” moments to share with us.

Figure 2. Students at McNair Middle School use the Oregon Citation Maker for citing sources.
interest. Finally, Katherine, who referred to herself as impatient and easily frustrated, described her project to be "fun" and wrote, "I was able to learn a lot about not only decorating cakes, but about myself."

Final Thoughts
We have learned that this is such a fun project, especially when the students become excited about receiving e-mails and calls, and have "Wow" and "Aha" moments to share with us. As educators, we too learn a lot about our teaching and ourselves by working with the students over the six-week Independent Study process. For example, in 2011 we were disappointed in the inaccuracy of the citations and the quality of sources used by the students. Vanessa scheduled an additional class period in the school library for students to correct the mistakes in their bibliographies. In 2012 we plan to spend more class time focusing on the evaluation of online sources.

The self-discovery applies to both students and to us, their teachers, and the rewards are great. We both agree that the habit of mind we regularly apply to this unit is learning continuously. Every year we adjust and work to improve the process to provide satisfying and authentic learning experiences for our students.

Figure 3. Students at McNair Middle School practice the game Mahjong.

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Works Cited:


As the authors of the articles in this issue of Knowledge Quest illustrate, an essential component of best practice in school librarianship includes coteaching AASL learning standards with classroom teachers. So how can you as a school librarian achieve the same level of quality coteaching with colleagues in your schools? An excellent first step is to use resources and strategies provided through AASL’s Learning4Life (L4L) initiative. The “Learning4Life Implementation Resources” brochure is an excellent starting point for helping you to apply the AASL learning standards to everyday practice (Ahard et al. 2010). The brochure, developed through the 2010 ALA Emerging Leaders Team Project, lists online resources that are correlated to each of the four AASL learning standards. Using these 21st-century tools...
You can position yourself as a curriculum leader in your school by demonstrating your knowledge of standards.

with teachers and students can help you and your teachers fully integrate the learning standards into your school’s curriculum. The brochure is available at <www.ala.org/aasl/learning4life>.

The rest of this article describes additional ways you can design and implement coteaching strategies with your colleagues through the use of L4L materials and the three Cs:

- Curriculum
- Collaboration
- Communication

Curriculum
School librarians can play an essential role in working with classroom teachers to develop lesson plans and strategies that integrate national, state, and district standards with content-area curricula. Understanding the correlations between standards enables school librarians to coteach with classroom teachers to ensure "that 21st-century information literacy skills, dispositions, responsibilities and assessments are integrated throughout all curriculum areas" (AASL 2010).

You can position yourself as a curriculum leader in your school by demonstrating your knowledge of standards. This is not as daunting a task as it seems, thanks to resources such as the "Crosswalk of the Common Core Standards and Standards for the 21st-Century Learner," which can help school librarians and teachers understand how these national standards align. The document is available at <www.alanet.org/aasl/commoncorecrosswalk>.

AASL’s Learning4Life Implementation Toolkit <www.alanet.org/aasl/toolkits> offers materials that can be shared with fellow educators to enhance their understanding of the standards and how to implement them in your schools. Within the toolkit <www.alanet.org/aasl/aaslissues/toolkits/bldngvl/building5> you will find links to online resources that describe correlations between AASL learning standards and national standards. Resources include:

- AASL learning standards, P21, and ISTE Skills comparison chart by Cassandra Barnett, AASL past-president, AASL Learning Standards Rewrite Task Force member, and AASL Learning Standards Indicators and Assessment Task Force member
- Sample correlations chart showing the connections between the AASL learning standards, various national standards, and district initiatives; the chart was created by Kristin Fontichiaro, Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force member and Michigan L4L Coordinator, and Sara Wilkie
- Judi Moreillon’s matrix aligning reading comprehension strategies with the AASL learning standards
- Doug Johnson’s comparison of the AASL learning standards and the ISTE NETS and Performance Indicators for Students: Part I and Part II
- Janet Murray’s alignment of the Big6, AASL standards, and NETS

Collaboration
When school librarians and educators collaborate to teach the standards, they can significantly impact student achievement and create lifelong learners. As Susan Ballard, AASL president-elect, wrote in Developing the Vision: An L4L Job Description for the 21st-Century, “As an instructional partner, the library media specialist (SLMS) works with teachers and other educators to build and strengthen connections between student information and research needs, curriculum content, learning outcomes, and information resources” (2009, 81).
School librarians and classroom teachers can collaborate on curriculum-based lesson plans through the use of the Standards for the 21st-Century Lesson Plan Database available at <http://aasl.jesandco.org>. You and your colleagues can use existing plans organized by learning standards and indicators, content topics, grade levels and more, or you can codesign your own lessons and add them to the database for other school librarians and their colleagues to access.

You should also consider partnering with classroom teachers to provide professional-development opportunities for your faculty, using websites listed in the “Learning4Life Implementation Resources” brochure and the AASL’s “Top 25 Websites for Teaching and Learning” list accessible at <www.al.org/aasl/bestlist>. You can teach your colleagues how to promote student engagement using technology-based lessons and activities that correlate with the national, state, and district standards.

Communication
At the same time you are implementing the standards as a curriculum leader and coteacher in your school, you should be sharing your successes with stakeholders in your school and community. When it comes to advocating for your school library program, it is important to have professional resources to help get your message out. AASL has developed a variety of L4L materials that you can use to market your school library program and the critical role that you play in facilitating teaching and learning. For example, free PDF files of brochures, note cards, and banners, plus PowerPoint templates, are available at <www.ala.org/aasl/learning4life>. In addition, you can download and customize a sample PowerPoint presentation “Our School Library and the AASL Learning Standards” to use with parents, faculty, administrators, and legislators. Using these and other tools can help these stakeholders value and support your school library program.

Conclusion
School librarians are uniquely qualified to work with classroom teachers to facilitate student learning and achievement. When the school librarian works with fellow educators to plan, teach, and assess curriculum-based instruction, students will become more “effective users of ideas and information” (AASL and AECT 1998, 6). Through the coteaching of a standards-based curriculum, ongoing collaboration, and effective communication, you and your classroom teachers can help to ensure that your students are truly “Learning4Life.”

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Works Cited


“Um, I don’t like books,’ I said, innocent of the effect those words would have on a person who had devoted her entire adult life to book husbandry.”

There’s a Book Looking for You!

Carmen Agra Deedy

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I was nearly eight years old the first time I walked into a library. Our elementary school did not issue library cards to students until the third grade. My hazy memories of those first school years incline me to believe that we were indeed a rather feral horde. As for the public library? Most children preferred to build forts, climb trees, and explore abandoned houses to being cooped up in the tyranny of buildings of any fashion—with two significant exceptions: the odd child who liked being in the public library, and the child who was sent to the library by exhausted or indifferent caretakers, in need of free babysitting.

My sister joined the latter group the day she dropped me off at the Maude M. Burris Public Library on her way to ballet practice. It was a sweltering summer afternoon that bordered on the malarial, and the heat had rendered us sticky and ill-tempered.

“How come I gotta go in there?” I groused.

“There’s air conditioning,” she coaxed.

A bead of sweat trickled down my temple. Air conditioning? Now that might be a modern amenity worth investigating. But then what? “What am I supposed to do for a whole hour?”

She was an avid reader and could not fathom why I refused to raise the literary bar any higher than my beloved Aquaman comic books. "Read a book," my sister said with irritation. She was an avid reader and could not fathom why I refused to raise the literary bar any higher than my beloved Aquaman comic books. Also, she was late for practice, so she opened the door and gave
me a firm nudge. "Go. And stay out of trouble. You mess around in there, and that library lady will pinch your head off." With that, she whirped around and dashed away, leaving me on my own, but not alone, strictly speaking.

"And who might this be?" The voice was warm and heavy with Southern inflection. The stacks of books to my left and right were packed so tightly that they allowed only a narrow corridor between them. At the end of this passage stood a continent of a desk, and looming behind it, a mountain of a woman: the head pincher, I surmised. She spoke again, this time with more insistence and less warmth. "Come closer, please." Her eyes widened expectantly.

When I was a child, if adults called to you, you ignored them at your peril. "You must be new to this library," she paused and wagged her fingers impatiently for me to draw closer. "You'll need a library card."

"A lib—?"

"A library card," she repeated, "You cannot check out a book without a library card." She shook her head at the general denseness of children. It was at that moment that I realized what she was saying. Check out a book? Was she kidding?

"Um, I don't like books," I said, innocent of the effect those words would have on a person who had devoted her entire adult life to book husbandry.

Her face fell like warm bread dough, and her eyes narrowed to pale blue slits. "Don't like books? I see."

"I mean—"

"Don't interrupt. I shall tell you why you do not like books, young Miss."

Her voice was a raspy whisper as she leaned toward me. fingers splayed out on her desk. "You do not like books...because IT hasn't found you yet."

I let her words sink in.

"Some—something's looking for me?" I felt a tingle at the base of my skull.

She shuffled papers from one hemisphere of her desk to another, in a way that even a child could see no purpose served other than to give the illusion of industry. "There is a book looking for every child," she declared.

"Is it here?" My voice rose an octave on the word "here."

"That's the problem, of course. One never knows. But my best bet would be the Children's Room." Then she turned her eyes upward, and even I understood that I had been dismissed.

I found the Children's Room in the rear of the building—it was small, but beautiful, in that way that old libraries are beautiful. The shelves were full of brightly colored books; in the window seat were needlepoint pillows that depicted scenes from old fairy tales, and the walls—oh my, the walls! All four walls comprised a brilliant mural of book characters.

I circled the room, entranced, letting my fingers trail along the spines of the books that lined the bottom third of those walls when—

Thunk! A book fell at my feet.

Fell? Or had it...jumped?

I jerked back and stared for a moment before lowering myself to the floor for a closer look. "Are you looking for me?"

Mercifully, there was no answer. The title was too enigmatic to offer any real clues to the story, so I opened the book and read the first sentence aloud: "Where's Papa going with that ax?"

Well, well, this was promising. Children are, after all, bloodthirsty little creatures. I dropped to the floor and crossed my legs. There I remained, ignoring the numbness in my toes and the ache in my backside, until my sister came to fetch me.

"Whoa! You're reading a book?" she cried. I made a face and tried to wave her off, but she was resolute; we had to go home. Supper was waiting.

"I gotta finish this book," I insisted.

"You can take it home, boba."

She poked me with her shoe. "It's a library."

The explanation that this was a lending library—a bookstore with a time limit, if you will—was a striking revelation. I would have to approach the head librarian again, however. I made my way back to the main hall, slid the book onto the edge of the desk, and waited. She glanced down at it and frowned. "How old are you?"

"I'm almost eight years old," I said, my fingers itching to get hold of that book again.

"That makes you seven." Then she sighed and said, "I don't believe you're ready for this book."

I froze. "I'm—I'm feeling really ready for that book." I said with all the firmness I could rally. Head pincher or no head pincher I simply must, must—I thought—get my hands on that book again. It was my first experience with book lust.

She stared at me with marked disapproval.
And, in a flash of inspiration, I knew how to convince her. "That book was looking for me."

She made a little strangled sound that was followed by a good deal of coughing. "Oh, my," she said, at last. "Very well then. It’s yours until the seventeenth." She stamped my card with a little more force than I thought was called for, and added, "But—mind—you’ll be sorry."

It took me weeks to finish that book. When I turned the last tragic page, I knew I needed to see the librarian again without delay.

"Well?" was all she said, as I stood before her with the book clasped to my small chest.

"Charlotte is dead." It was an accusation.

"I tried to warn you." The words were prickly, but the tone kind.

"Please, could you..." I paused, and this time the words flew from my lips like swallows from the Presbyterian Church steeple at dusk. "Please, could you give me another one?"

The smile spread slowly, until it reached her eyes. Then she stood and walked around the desk.

"I have a better book for you than Charlotte’s Web," she said, and took my hand.

A better book than Charlotte’s Web? That was impossible, and I told her as much.

"Ah. That’s because you haven’t read Anne of Green Gables." She paused and looked at me with a face full of mischief, and added, "It’s about a cranky old woman and an impudent little girl...you’re going to love it."

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For over twenty years, Carmen Agra Deedy has been traveling the world, writing, and telling stories to adults and children. Born in Havana, Cuba, she came to the U.S. in 1964 and grew up in Decatur, Georgia, where she lives today. She is the author of many popular picture books, including The New York Times bestseller 14 Cows for America (Peachtree 2009), Martina the Beautiful Cockroach (Peachtree 2008, also available in Spanish), and The Library Dragon (Peachtree 1994). The Cheshire Cheese Cat (Peachtree 2011) is her first chapter book. A familiar voice on NPR’s Weekend All Things Considered, she compiled an audio collection of her stories, Growing Up Cuban in Decatur, Georgia (Peachtree 2004), which won a Parents’ Choice Gold Award and was named Best Audiobook—Storytelling by Publishers Weekly. The author has told stories to hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren. They remain her favorite audience.

AASL is excited to have award-winning author, Carmen Agra Deedy, headline the AASL Awards Luncheon! The event takes place on June 25 at the 2012 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA and highlights best practices in school library programming. Visit AASL’s Awards Program site <www.ala.org/aasl/awardsprogram> for more information.