

LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS AS
LITERACY LEADERS

by

Amanda S. Buckley

An Abstract

of a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Library Science and Information Services
in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development
University of Central Missouri

April, 2011

ABSTRACT

by

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The promotion and teaching of literacy to students is no longer confined to the classroom teacher. Library media specialists are in a position within their community, schools, and libraries to promote literacy and become literacy leaders. The following is a review of literature that supports this idea. The research indicates that library media specialists are forming partnerships with public librarians in the community and with parents to promote literacy. The research demonstrates library media specialists are also promoting literacy within their schools. In addition, a description of how library media specialists use their library resources to promote literacy is included.

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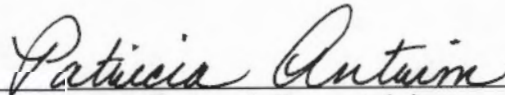
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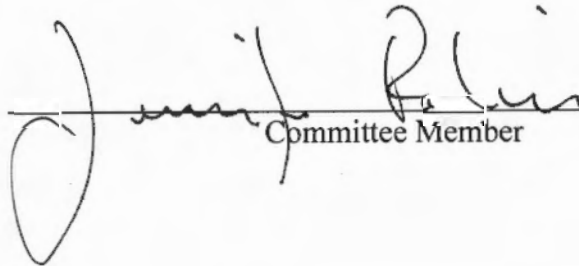
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first and foremost thank my husband, Scott Buckley, for your unending support and encouragement during this entire process. I could not have done it without you! I also want to thank Susan Buckley. I know you did it so you could have “grandma time,” but you gave me the gift of peace and quiet for which I can never repay you! Thank you also to my mom and dad, Diana and Jacky Brown. You also provided me with quiet work times. Mom, thanks for your listening ear as well. I can always count on you to listen when I need to talk! It could be about my plans for world domination or it could be about nothing at all, but you always listen! Thank you!

Thank you to Dr. Jennifer Robins for your guidance and support during this process as well. You are always quick to respond and clarify my many questions. I also would like to thank Dr. Dana Kepler and Nicole Bashard for letting my come into your libraries to both observe and learn.

Finally I want to thank Madison and Logan. You gave up much “mommy time” but were (mostly) cooperative and understanding. Thank you for being my guinea pigs and showing what wonderful brains and ideas develop when parents read to their children. I love you both and you are the reason I do what I do.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Research conducted by The Alliance for Excellent Education found that as students graduate from high school and pursue a higher education, they are frequently unprepared for the demands of college work (Wise 372). This same research noted that employers are disappointed in the reading skills of high school graduates. In 2003, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ranked American high school students fifteenth out of 29 countries in reading literacy (Wise 372). The ability to read is the cornerstone of student achievement for all grade levels. Research by the American College Testing Program (ACT) has found that the greater the reading skills a student has in high school, the greater his or her achievement will be in other areas such as math, science, and social studies (Wise 373). The teaching of reading skills starts well before a child enters kindergarten (Kissinger 58). While parents lay the foundation for literacy in their children's lives, it is also the responsibility of the educational system to make sure the teaching of literacy skills is continued and cultivated (McPherson 72). The responsibility to teach literacy in school no longer rests completely with the classroom teacher (McPherson 71). Research indicates that library media specialists are influential in the academic success of students (McPherson 73). Library media specialists are in a position to become literacy leaders in school and in the community.

A 2007 report by the National Endowments for the Arts entitled "To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence" found that as a whole, Americans are reading less. This same report also found reading comprehension skills are deteriorating;

and over time, the lack of reading skills could cause social, cultural, and economic ramifications. Only thirty-five percent of high school seniors are able to read proficiently (National Endowments for the Arts). The report also validated reading for pleasure. The report found that students who read for pleasure are better readers and have higher reading scores. One conclusion from this report is that students today need to be encouraged to read for pleasure.

Literacy leaders within the school system advocate for the development of life-long readers (Marcoux and Loertscher 8). Library media specialists have knowledge about both books and reading so they are able to fill the role of literacy leader (Cart 9). Library media specialists are promoting literacy through partnerships with public libraries (Bates and Webster; Coulter). These partnerships promote literacy by providing students' access to both the public and school library. Literacy leaders partner with parents to involve them in the reading process. Library media specialists are planning and organizing family reading nights to help foster a positive relationship with parents (Chance; Rehmer).

Literacy leaders are able to reach outside the comfort of their own libraries and actively pursue relationships with administration and teachers (Cart). Library media specialists are collaborating at both the elementary and secondary level to increase students' reading scores and to help with research projects (Beard and Antrim; Long; Meyer). Literacy leaders look at the special populations of students they serve and look for ways to promote literacy to these students as well (Patton; Moorefield-Lang, Anaya, and Shirk). Library media specialists promote literacy by using books within their

collection to model positive reading behavior. They advocate for free reading times within their schools (Bernadowski; Krashen). Literacy leaders are using technology and embracing new ways to promote reading to the students they serve. Library media specialists are creating library Web pages where students are able to browse the library's catalog, join an online book club, review a book they read, and read recommendations from their peers about books that may be of interest to them (Lamb and Johnson; Fisher and Hill). Library media specialists are becoming literacy leaders within the communities and schools where they work in order to promote literacy to the students they serve.

Statement of the Problem

Current research confirms that students are struggling in the area of reading (Wise). Students need to learn to read but they also need to read to learn. The responsibility of teaching reading and promoting literacy is no longer the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher (Marcoux and Loertscher 8). A student's ability to read and read well affects every aspect of their schooling. The following research is relevant to this problem by demonstrating how library media specialists are becoming literacy leaders by promoting literacy within the communities, schools, and libraries where they work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to review literature that demonstrates what library media specialists are doing to promote literacy in the communities and schools where they work. Literature was reviewed to find various examples of how library media specialists are collaborating with public librarians and parents to promote literacy.

Attention is given to specific activities library media specialists are doing at the various classroom levels to promote literacy. Literature was also reviewed that highlights what library media specialists are doing within their own libraries to promote literacy. The result of this study demonstrates that library media specialists are being literacy leaders within their community, their schools, and within their libraries.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are library media specialists doing to promote literacy in their communities?
2. How are library media specialists promoting literacy by partnering with teachers?
3. How is literacy promoted within the library?
4. How is literacy promoted via the library Web page?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study include the availability of peer-reviewed journal articles on promoting the library media specialists as a literacy leader. Another limitation of the study was the availability of research from individual library media specialists on their effect on student achievement available in peer-reviewed journals. Another limitation was that the subject of beginning literacy was not covered. The scope of the data collection included journals and articles dealing with collaboration efforts between library media specialists with public librarians, parents, administrators, and teachers.

Definitions of Terms

Collaboration -To work together with others toward a common goal.

English Language Learners (ELL) - Students whose secondary language is English.

Library Media Specialist - An instructional partner in the education process who is also a teacher, administrator of the library, and information specialist (Weil).

Literacy - The ability to read.

Special Education - The method of teaching students who have some form of a mental or physical disability and whose needs are not fully met in a regular classroom.

Specially trained teachers provide differentiated learning strategies customized for each student.

Research Design

The research study collected previously published information pertaining to library media specialists who promoted literacy within the schools and communities where they taught. No research was conducted. Instead, literature that was relevant to the topic was reviewed for the purpose of this study.

Articles were retrieved from the following databases: *Education Research Complete*; *ERIC*; *Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts*; and *Library Literature and Information Science Full Text*. Search terms included “library media specialist + leader”, “teacher-librarian + literacy”, “library media specialist + administrators”, “library media specialist + collaboration”, “public library + school library”, “school library + parents”, “teacher-librarian + special education”, and “teacher-librarian + ELL”.

The study included three chapters related to how library media specialists are becoming the literacy leader in the communities and schools where they work. The following chapter is a review of the literature. Chapter three consists of answers to the research questions posed in chapter one and a discussion that includes a conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: PROMOTING LITERACY

A student's ability to read is a key component of learning that needs to be in place in order for the education process to successfully work. If a child does not have a firm foundation in reading, the rest of his or her schooling is in vain (Wise 373). The responsibility for teaching and promoting literacy does not lie solely on the classroom teachers. That responsibility rests with everyone involved in the education process (McPherson 71). Library media specialists are in a position to become literacy leaders within the education system (Kindig 28). Library media specialists are promoting literacy within the community, their school, and in their libraries.

Library media specialists are forming partnerships with the public librarian and parents, as well as school administrators, in their efforts to promote literacy. Library media specialists also are collaborating with teachers in both the elementary and secondary levels. They are working with both the special education and the English language learners' (ELL) teachers to promote literacy to these unique populations. Library media specialists have a wide range of reading material within the library collection, and these collections are tools to be utilized in the promotion of literacy. Many library media specialists are thinking "outside of the box" about how library resources are used to promote literacy within their schools. The research presented in this chapter demonstrates that library media specialists are using their knowledge about literacy to be leaders in the education process by promoting literacy at these various levels.

When questioned about a recent Carnegie Corporation study that focused on advancing literacy, American Library Association (ALA) former president, Camila Aire,

sums up her feelings to Paula Brehm-Heeger on why library media specialists are the obvious choice for being at the forefront of literacy promotion:

Libraries are core to literacy! We have not been as aggressive in this area to be recognized as a possible solution to this great challenge. What can librarians do? We should be sitting at the literacy table. We should be working and partnering with non-library literacy programs in our communities. And, if there are no such programs in our small communities, librarians should be working with state literacy programs to see how libraries can serve their communities concerning literacy (14).

The following literature review demonstrates and supports the idea that library media specialists are literacy leaders through the various ways they promote literacy.

Promoting Literacy within the Community

The American Association of School Librarians' *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* are guidelines for students to follow. Guideline 3.2.3 states, "Demonstrate teamwork by working productively with others" (American Association of School Librarians 6). Teamwork is expected of students and it is also expected of library media specialists who instruct them. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has guidelines that are specific to library media specialist that encourage collaboration (19). Research demonstrates that library media specialists are working productively with public librarians and parents to promote literacy within their community.

Partnering with Public Libraries

One way that library media specialists are thinking outside the box to promote literacy is by thinking outside their own libraries. Library media specialists are looking to the local public library as an avenue to expand upon their current in-house collections. Both public schools and public libraries are facing shortfalls due to the current economic situation in the United States. In spite of the economy, library media specialists are still required by standards in many states to provide a wide variety of materials to their students. The partnership between public and school librarians expands the students' access to materials. The students are able to access the material not only found in their school library, but in the public library as well. It also contributes to a more literate community (Bates and Webster 50). Both school and public libraries are facing shrinking budgets and some partnerships are forged from necessity, but the benefit to the students has been a welcome outcome (Coulter 42). By public librarians working together with school library media specialists to promote summer reading programs, for example, students are reading more over the summer months and coming to school ready to learn (Roman, Carran, and Fiore 20-21). In order for students to experience optimal learning, school library media specialists are seeking ongoing partnerships with the public librarians. School library media specialists promote literacy by partnering with public librarians.

A study conducted between 2006 and 2009 by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Dominican University looked at the importance of summer reading programs on student reading achievement (Roman, Carran, and Fiore 20-21).

Public librarians plan summer reading programs with the purpose of promoting reading and to help prevent the loss of reading skills over summer months (20). These programs typically allow students the opportunity to win prizes based on how many books they read over the summer months (Bates and Webster 49). The study gathered data on third grade students who would enter the fourth grade the following fall. Students were given a reading test at the end of their third grade year and another reading test at the beginning of their fourth grade year. The Dominican Study concluded that when students participated in the public library summer reading program, their overall scores on reading achievement tests were higher the following school year. Parents of students who participated in the summer reading program shared their observations about how the reading program affected their children (Roman, Carran, and Fiore 20-21). These parents felt their children read with more confidence after completing the summer reading program. They also felt their children were more prepared for school in the fall.

Teachers and library media specialists who worked directly with students also gave feedback in the Dominican Study. The teachers felt students who participated in the summer reading program had improved reading skills, had a greater joy of reading, and exhibited more confidence in reading activities. Teachers also felt the students were motivated to read and expressed a true enjoyment in the reading process (Roman, Carran, and Fiore 20-21). By the library media specialist partnering with the public library, literacy was promoted over the summer months. Both students' reading scores and confidence are improved when library media specialists promote literacy by partnering with public librarians.

In the small community of Augusta, Virginia, a public library and local school library demonstrated the positive effects a shared partnership brings to literacy promotion (Coulter 42). In this study the public librarian and the school library media specialist worked together to promote the summer reading program. This partnership was initially forged out of necessity because of budgets cuts during a recession. The school was not able to offer summer school and the public library could not afford promotional material for its summer reading program. By working together, the librarians helped students retain their literacy skills over the summer months. The public librarian created brochures to promote the summer reading program and reading logs for students to use. The school district printed the materials, which were distributed by the library media specialist before summer vacation. For each hour spent reading, the students earned a ticket. These tickets were entered into drawings for various prizes that were given away by the public librarian at the end of the summer reading program. In the seven weeks of the program, students read a total of 11,938 hours. By partnering together, both the school and public library saved money. This partnership also emphasized to the students the importance of literacy.

In Fresno County, California, the local public librarian teamed up with the school library media specialist to form an effective, literacy-driven partnership (MacDonald 11-12). The two libraries linked their online catalogs and shared online subscription databases. This expanded the material to which students had access. The two librarians shared book lists and award lists as well. The book lists were provided to give students suggestions of books they might enjoy reading. If one library did not have a book a

student was interested in reading, then the other library's catalog could be accessed to see if it was available to the student. They also worked together to promote book clubs and arranged shared author visits. Through the sharing of ideas and resources, student achievement and literacy were pushed to the forefront of both librarians' goals. This is another example of how partnering with a local public librarian makes the library media specialist a literacy leader.

Partnering with Parents

Research shows a positive correlation between early literacy skills and reading success later in life (Kissinger 58). In 1995 Barbara DeBaryshe found a correlation between how mothers interact with their children during the reading process and their children's desire to read (qtd. in Kissinger 58). DeBaryshe observed that mothers who read to their children and engaged in conversation with their children about the reading caused the children to be more motivated to read.

Library media specialists are partnering with parents to promote these early literacy skills by hosting family reading nights. Family reading nights actively involve parents in their child's literacy (Rehmer 16). Family reading nights provide an opportunity for parents and children to dialogue about what they are reading. Family reading nights also are a way for parents to be introduced to the library media program. Library media specialists promote literacy within the community by partnering with parents to provide family literacy events at their libraries. Family reading nights are functioning in different ways based on the various student populations where they are held. They are typically events that the library media specialist plans in order to bring

students and their parents into the library so they are able to share a reading experience together (Chance 9).

Amy Owens is a library media specialist in Texas who serves a high population of at-risk and Spanish-speaking students (Chance 9). She sees family reading nights as an opportunity to help her students become better readers. Her approach is informal but her goal is for both children and parents to have positive interactions with books. She provides a maze or word search upon arrival. She then has a guest reader share a story. The guest reader is typically a teacher, administrator, parent, or sometimes a well-known community member. Owens gives away prizes at each family reading night along with simple refreshments (Chance 10). Family reading nights are allowing students and their parents an opportunity to have a positive interaction in the school library. They also allow the families that attend the opportunity to get to know both the library media specialists and the library programs better. As the parents become more comfortable in the library, they are more likely to attend both family reading nights and other school functions. When parents become involved in their children's education, their children are more likely to succeed in not only the area of reading, but in their entire education (Chance 10). Library media specialists promote literacy by hosting family reading nights as a way for both students and parents to have positive interactions with reading.

Promoting Literacy within the School Community

Library media specialists are in a unique position because they have the ability to promote literacy within the school community. Library media specialists have access to current literacy information via professional organizations and peer-reviewed journals.

The research demonstrates that library media specialists are using their knowledge about literacy to be equal partners in the education process by reaching out to their administrators and collaborating with teachers (Lance, Rodney, and Schwarz; Oberg 14). These collaborations are taking on different shapes and forms and are occurring at both the elementary and secondary level. Library media specialists also are collaborating with special education and English language learners' (ELL) teachers to promote literacy among these populations of students.

Partnering with Administrators

Principals are interested in improving student achievement and state-mandated test scores. Library media specialists and the libraries they run are two of the greatest tools principals have at their disposal in order for these goals to be met. Unfortunately, too many principals overlook the library media specialist due to “occupational invisibility” (Oberg 13). To become a visible force within the greater school community, library media specialists are reaching out to their building principals. Research shows that library media specialists in partnership with their administrators are in a position to promote literacy.

A study done in Virginia analyzed what influences building administrators' views of the instructional role of library media specialists (Church). Less than two percent said their administration training was the primary source of information on the role of library media specialists. Instead, sixty-five percent of the administrators surveyed said they get their information directly from their library media specialists and the interactions they have with them. This research confirms the fact that library media specialists have the

responsibility to educate and be vocal about the positive role the library has on student learning. Library media specialists are literacy leaders when they reach out to their building administration.

School Library Journal published a survey of building administrators on their perception of the library media specialist. Of the administrators surveyed, forty-seven percent agreed there is a direct connection between improved student achievement and a quality media center, while only forty-one percent of administrators felt the school's media center had a positive impact on standardized test scores (Lau 52-53). In 2001, both Keith Lance and Ester Smith conducted research studies on the impact of library media specialists on student achievement. Both studies showed a high correlation between student achievement and a quality library media program that was run by a qualified library media specialist. A quality library media program includes a large, up-to-date collection, adequate budget, library support staff, flexible schedule, and a library media specialist who is involved in the both the planning and implementing of lessons (Lance; Smith). The above factors are determined, in large part, by building administrators, which means the library media specialist has an ally in the building. However, a disconnect of information can exist between what library media specialists are doing and what administrators are seeing. The library media specialist has the responsibility to make sure this alliance is formed and maintained as a means for promoting literacy within the school community.

Partnering with Teachers

In a 2007 study conducted by the Idaho State Department of Education, administrators were asked about the value they placed on library media specialist and classroom teacher collaboration. Almost ninety percent of administrators said they felt this type of collaboration was essential. In this same survey, classroom teachers were asked about their collaboration efforts with library media specialists (Lance, Rodney, and Schwarz). Forty-five percent of teachers responded that neither they nor the library media specialist initiated instructional collaboration. This survey reveals that although administrators place value on such collaborative efforts, in reality, it is far from commonplace. Library media specialists promote literacy when they make a conscious effort to collaborate with classroom teachers. Library media specialists are working with elementary teachers to increase student reading levels. Library media specialists also are collaborating with high school teachers to improve the research process. This is happening at individual schools and across entire states. Library media specialists also are collaborating with specialized teachers such as special education and English language learners (ELL) to promote literacy to specific student populations. The following are examples of what library media specialists are doing in order to promote literacy within the school community.

At the elementary level.

Library media specialists promote literacy when they collaborate with classroom teachers to help improve students' reading scores. One way library media specialists do this is when they help classroom teachers instruct their below-grade-level students how to

find reading material that is appropriate for their reading level. A study was conducted in a fifth grade classroom that highlights the positive impact a library media specialist had on promoting literacy at the elementary level (Beard and Antrim 24). A fifth grade teacher used guided reading in her classroom as a means to help students become self-directed learners. Guided reading is a methodology that allows students to make reading goals for themselves and choose reading activities that are best suited for their needs. Students who are reading below grade level sometimes struggle to choose reading material that is best for them. This is when the library media specialist comes in and helps both the classroom teacher and the students who are struggling. The fifth grade teacher in this study required her below-level students to work with the library media specialist when they chose their reading material. The library media specialist helped them choose appropriate reading level books when they came into the library. The teacher and the library media specialist collaborated monthly to share student progress and instructional ideas for each student. The below-level students were assessed on their reading levels three times throughout the year. The teacher used the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and found that, of those students who worked directly with the library media specialist, their Lexile reading level scores had increased by about 100 points (Beard and Antrim 26). The library media specialist also found that after only two weeks of working with the students, the students were able to choose appropriate books for their reading level. The below-level students were more motivated to read more books after they worked with the library media specialist. Reading is the core to learning. When students are successful and confident readers, they are able to self-assess and choose

books that are best suited for their needs (Beard and Antrim 29). As students gain in their reading confidence, literacy is championed. Library media specialists promote literacy when they collaborate with classroom teachers at the elementary level to help students increase their reading scores.

At the secondary level.

At the Merced High School in California, library media specialist Debora Long collaborated with the literacy coach to show she was a literacy leader (13). The teachers at the high school noticed that students were unable to do adequate research for their classes. The students lacked the reading skills required to locate and then break down the information they found. As a whole, the teaching staff agreed upon the reciprocal teaching method as a means to help students improve their literacy and in turn, the quality of their research. Reciprocal teaching is a four-phase process that promotes a more intuitive interaction with the text that is being read. The four phases of the process involve making predictions, asking questions, clarifying the information, and then summarizing. The librarian and literacy coach worked together to create a research template that all students utilize when doing research projects. The template consisted of two sections: one section was for students to record the correct bibliographic information and the other section was for students' notes. The note section of the template was divided into two columns. The first column was for students to copy and paste information directly from the source where they located the information. The library media specialist wanted students to know that initially it is okay to copy and paste information. However, they needed to learn how to think through the information and

restate it in their own words. The second column was where students summarized the information, asked questions about it, and clarified their thoughts. The template was created as a Word document and the library media specialist included a link to the template on the library's Web page.

After one semester of teaching and using the template, the library media specialist conducted a survey of both students and staff about their opinions of the research template. Overall the teachers felt the template was useful. They also felt that the quality of students' research projects had improved. Students preferred the template over traditional paper and pencil note-taking. Some students also used the template for projects other than the assigned research projects. The library media specialist and literacy coach felt their collaboration was a success because student achievement was increased. Library media specialists are literacy leaders when they collaborate with teachers to create tools to help students become better researchers. Library media specialists also promote literacy when they help teachers teach more effectively.

Another example of library media specialists promoting literacy at the high school level through collaboration involved teachers, administrators, and librarians from across the state of Washington (Meyer 40). This collaboration effort was four years in the making, but it highlights a statewide initiative that shows just how successful collaboration is. A library media specialist task force was created to work directly with social studies teachers. The goal was to collaborate on ideas of how the new Washington State Social Studies Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) would be implemented in both the classrooms and the libraries. Another goal was to create a more streamlined

research process that all students could use across the entire state. Classroom Based Assessments are defined as “multi-stepped tasks or projects aligned to specific state standards, which target skills and knowledge necessary for engaged, informed citizenship" ("Social Studies - Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) "). The multi-step part of the assessments was the research process, and library media specialists worked with classroom teachers to create a common process and language to make the research process more efficient. The research process the library media specialists suggested laid the foundation for the classroom-based assessments' common steps.

The common steps are used by classroom teachers in evaluating each classroom based assessment (CBA) and became the research process that would be implemented. The common steps are as follows: essential questions, key concepts and vocabulary, inquiry and reading, organization and synthesis, group process and discussion, and position writing and presentation (Meyer 41). The students use these common steps to guide them throughout their research process starting with essential questions and ending with their final paper or presentation.

The library media specialists were involved in teaching the research process at staff workshops in various schools throughout the entire state of Washington and were viewed as equals in the education process. The library media specialists called upon their knowledge of creating bibliographies, evaluating reliable sources, and organizing online resources. The library media specialists also were attuned to trends in information literacy and knew of efficient Web 2.0 tools such as wikis, Google docs, and pathfinders that teachers could use to help enhance the research process. By using a standard

language and the same common steps for research, both librarians and social studies teachers felt better prepared for both implementing and teaching the research process. The research process was improved and a result, so was the students' quality of research. Library media specialists promote literacy when they help both students and teachers improve their research process at the secondary level.

With special education teachers.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students with disabilities made up approximately fourteen percent of both the elementary and secondary public school enrollment for the 2005-2006 school year. Students with disabilities need literacy skills just as the regular student population does. Library media specialists promote literacy when they collaborate with special education teachers to ensure all the students they serve are literate and successful in school.

Allen and Hughes-Hassell conducted a research study to evaluate how prepared library media specialists are to meet the needs of students with disabilities (52-54). This study asked library media specialists about their knowledge of special education. Twenty-two percent of the library media specialists said they received information on the best teaching practices in special education. Their primary source of information was the special education teacher. When asked about their knowledge of best teaching practices for special education, eighty-two percent of library media specialists gave themselves a C or D and eight percent gave themselves a F. This study highlights the need for library media specialist to collaborate with special education teachers. Library media specialists in this particular study lacked the information to best promote literacy among students

with disabilities. In the AASL's *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*, a clear statement about equality is given: "All children deserve equitable access to books and reading, to information, and to information technology in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning." Library media specialists promote literacy when they partner with the special education teachers to ensure this group of students receives the services they need.

Library media specialist Dawn Blaum and special education teacher Cathy Bryant collaborated over a fairy tale unit as a means of promoting literacy to one group of special education students (34). During their initial collaboration they planned out simple literacy goals for the students such as listen, view, and read for pleasure. As the fairy tale unit progressed Blaum felt that their initial expectations for the students were set too low. Both Blaum and Bryant decided to teach students about the various elements that make up a fairy tale. As the students mastered the elements and gained confidence in their answers, Blaum and Bryant decided to have the students write their own fairy tales. They broke down the process to not overwhelm the students (34). Blaum brainstormed with the students during their time in the library and did all the writing for them. She then typed each student's fairy tale and left blank pages for students to draw their own illustrations. By the end of the collaboration each student was able to read his or her fairy tale out loud. Both Blaum and Bryant overcame preconceived notions about special education students and were pleased with the outcome of their collaboration (35). Blaum promoted literacy by allowing this group of special need students the opportunity to create and read their own stories.

With the English language learner (ELL) teachers.

According to the National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition approximately 3.5 million English language learners (ELL) were enrolled in public school during the 2006-2007 school year (National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition 2010). An ELL student is defined as a student whose secondary language is English (Honigsfeld 167). ELL students do not typically speak or read well in English. In a 2009 survey by the American Association of School Librarians, fourteen percent of the librarians who responded said they had a twenty-five percent or higher student population of ELL students. However, ninety-one percent of the librarians reported that less than five percent of the collections are in a language other than English. The American Library Association (ALA) has provided a guideline for library media specialists to follow in regard to the responsibility they have to ELL students. The guideline states, "Schools serving communities in which other languages are used make efforts to accommodate the needs of students for whom English is a second language" (American Library Association). Through collaboration with ELL teachers, the library media specialist is a literacy leader by ensuring the ELL population the specialists serve has accommodations to become literate in both their native tongue and the English language.

Laurel Patton found a unique way to promote literacy with her ELL students through collaboration with the ELL teacher, Ms. Okizaki (44). Patton approached Okizaki with the idea of using karaoke as a means for teaching both reading and speaking skills. She wanted the ELL students to feel more confident in their ability to speak English in front of their peers (44). She also wanted them to have a fun and positive

experience in the library. The students in the ELL class came from a variety of countries and when she initially presented the idea to the students, she was met with reluctance. Patton gave Okizaki copies of the song lyrics prior to the students coming into the library. This enabled them the opportunity to practice the words and clarify any they did not know how to pronounce. It also gave them a chance to learn the meaning of new words. Once the class came to the library, Patton played the song with the original vocals as well as projecting the lyrics on a screen so the students could both read and orally sing along (Patton 45). Patton found that students, who were originally initially hesitant, could not wait to sing before their peers. Patton is promoting literacy by enabling her ELL students the opportunity to acquire new words and the ability to read them both verbally and mentally.

Heather Moorefield-Lang is another library media specialist who promoted literacy to ELL students through collaboration with the ELL teacher and the Spanish teacher (Moorefield-Lang, Anaya, and Shirk 22). Moorefield-Lang had a strong belief that all students who come into her library needed to be served. As the Spanish-speaking ELL population of students within her building grew, she decided to reach out to both the ELL and Spanish teacher for ideas on how she could create a welcoming and literacy-rich environment for these students. The first area they decided needed attention was the library collection itself. The three teachers worked together to select and purchase books for the Spanish-speaking students (22). Moorefield-Lang also purchased posters and signs for the library that were in Spanish. ELL students began to practice their English reading skills, but they were still able to read in their native language if they wanted.

Moorefield-Lang even took it one step further and learned Spanish herself so she was able to communicate with her Spanish-speaking students and engage them in conversations about what they were reading. The ELL teacher found a set of encyclopedias in Spanish also helped her students with their research projects. The collection also contained English books at all levels including low-level picture books and grade-level appropriate books to help students gain fluency in their English reading (23). Because Moorefield-Lang created such a welcoming environment in the library, the ELL students did not hesitate to ask for help in searching for a reading book. The library media specialist promoted literacy by enabling ELL students the confidence to read both in their native language and in English.

Promoting Literacy in the Library

Library media specialists have access to the greatest tool for promoting literacy: their collection. The collection consists of books, magazines, audio books, and online resources. Library media specialists initiate programs to promote reading for pleasure. They model good reading habits, provide their students with booktalks, and advocate for silent sustained reading time. Research shows that when students have access to quality reading material that is of interest to them, they are more likely to read. Library media specialists are using this information to purchase materials that will pique their students' interest, and thus, promote reading. Library media specialists are thinking beyond the physical space of the library by creating and maintaining a virtual or Web-based presence. Librarians are literacy leaders when they promote literacy within their own library.

Programs that Promote Reading for Pleasure

In 2008, a study was conducted in the United Kingdom to determine the personal reading habits and knowledge of children's literature. Twelve hundred classroom teachers were surveyed. The goal of this research was to determine if any connections existed between a teacher's knowledge of children's literature and their ability to teach reading (Cremin et al. 449-453). Teachers were asked about their own personal reading habits and preferences. The study found that about seventy-five percent of the teachers enjoyed reading for pleasure and made time for it each month. It also found that most teachers could recall favorite authors from their own childhood, but lacked knowledge about current authors. When asked to name at least six good children authors, ten percent of the teachers listed two or fewer authors. The second section of the survey asked teachers about their knowledge of children's poetry. Once again, the teachers were asked to identify six good children's poets. Fifty-eight percent could name two or fewer poets. The last area of the study asked teachers about their knowledge of children picture books authors/illustrators. Only ten percent were able to identify at least six good authors/illustrators. The study also found that most teachers had a very limited knowledge of authors and books outside of their own country. The overall summation of the study was that if students are going to become independent readers and read for pleasure, then teachers need more support so they can better match books to students and students to books so a meaningful reading experience can be had. Library media specialists are able to use their collection to provide this support to teachers in order to promote literacy.

A study by McQuillan and Au in 2001 found that the more access students had to reading material, the more they engaged in reading for pleasure. McQuillan and Au measured a group of high school students' print exposure by using three different assessments: the Author Recognition Test (ART), the Magazine Recognition Test (MRT), and a Free Reading time report that students filled out by themselves. Of the three means for gathering information, the free reading report gave McQuillan and Au the most information on students' reading habits and their comprehension levels. They concluded that the greater access students have to reading materials, the more likely they are to engage in reading. The more students engage in reading, the greater their reading comprehension (McQuillan and Au). Library media specialists have the ability to control what types of books students have access to. When library media specialists provide a wide variety of reading material for their students, they promote literacy within the library.

Carianne Bernadowski advocates for library media specialists to promote literacy by modeling to students how to read. Bernadowski is a professor of education and an author. She has found that students learn the most by watching. When library media specialists model what good readers do, they are setting the stage for literacy development in their students. For example, Bernadowski encourages library media specialists to remind students that it is okay to stop reading a book if they are not enjoying it (28). Just as adults do not always finish the books they start, students need to know that the same is true for them. By giving students freedom in what they are reading and selecting from the collection, the library media specialist is a literacy leader.

Library media specialists promote literacy when they provide booktalks to their students. When students come into the library, most of them desire to find books that are of interest to them. Depending on the size of the collection, students might feel overwhelmed when they are given the opportunity to locate a reading book by themselves. Booktalks are a way to help students navigate the collection and find reading books they truly want to read. Booktalks are brief “hooks” library media specialists use to get students interested in a particular book. Sonja Cole suggests that the library media specialist limit booktalks to five to seven sentences (41). Library media specialists should be honest about whether they have read the entire book or not. The library media specialist is also not limited to delivering booktalks within the library. Booktalks’ formats are flexible and are given in individual classrooms or even at school-wide assemblies. An efficient way to keep track of the effectiveness of booktalks is for a library media specialist to keep records of circulation data on specific books after a booktalk has been delivered (Bernadowski 42). By connecting students to good books, the library media specialist promotes literacy.

Another way library media specialists promote literacy is by encouraging teachers and students to have a planned time set aside for reading each day. It is called by many names: free reading, sustained silent reading (SSR) or D.E.A.R. time (which stands for Drop Everything and Read). No matter what it is called, it promotes the same agenda: take 10 to 15 minutes from each school day and allow students to read whatever they want. Students do not complete reports or get grades for what they read; they are simply reading for their own personal pleasure at a set time each day. According to Krashen,

research in the area of pleasure reading has shown it has an impact on both vocabulary and spelling development. Reading for pleasure also enables students to have a better understanding of language and writing (42). One study he conducted compared reading scores of two groups of students: one group participated in sustained silent reading and the other group did not. He found that the students who were given a set time to read for pleasure performed better than the students who were not given time to read. Library media specialists are promoting literacy when they encourage times of sustained silent reading to their staff and students.

Creating a Virtual Presence

According to research done by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, in 2009 approximately ninety-five percent of teenagers in the United States have access to the Internet (Fox). This same research found that almost sixty-five percent of households have broadband Internet access at home. In a similar survey conducted by the same group, almost seventy-five percent of twelve through seventeen year-olds have their own cell phones and use them as their primary tool for communication (Lenhart et al.). Reading is no longer limited to what is available in print format. At the same time, library media specialists are no longer limited to the physical space in their library when it comes to promoting literacy. Library media specialists are creating an online presence to promote their library collection.

Annette Lamb and Larry Johnson believe that a virtual or Web presence enables the library media specialist to provide continued access to the collection by the students, staff, administrators, and parents they serve. They argue that since the library cannot be

opened all the time, a strong virtual presence provides an opportunity to continue promoting literacy when the library is closed. They suggest that library media specialists be involved in the creation of their own library Web pages as a way to lay the foundation for their libraries' online presence. Lamb and Johnson also suggest library media specialists provide tutorial videos on how to access the online catalog and databases from home. Library media specialists could link tutorial videos that cover a wide range of topics, from library orientation to proper citation formats. Lamb and Johnson also suggest the library's virtual presence be used to promote author visits, display newsletters, and answer frequently asked questions.

Creating and maintaining a blog about the school library is another way to have an online presence. Library media specialists are using blogs to discuss popular books, ask for feedback from students, and to allow students and teachers a place to request new material they would like to see added to the collection. By creating and maintaining a virtual presence, library media specialists promote literacy by providing students access to the library media center twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. By increasing the students' ability to access the library, the library media specialist is ensuring the students are able to use the library when it is most convenient for them.

Fisher and Hill, two high school library media specialists from New Jersey, believe in creating and maintaining a library presence online as a means of promoting literacy. They have found that, given their fast-paced lives, students want information when they want it. Fischer and Hill maintain a virtual presence that promotes literacy and serves their patrons' needs (23). They have created an interactive Web page that

functions to promote literacy in a variety of formats. Instead of posting suggested reading lists, they instead subscribe to a chapter-of-the-day club. This service posts a chapter from a book as a way to hook students into reading the rest of the book. Another way they promote literacy via the library Web page is by providing online book lists that include short summaries of books that can be checked out from the library.

Fisher and Hill also have online request forms for library materials. This helps to promote literacy by providing library access beyond the regular school day. They also provide online book lists that include short summaries of the books their library has in the collection. Students can go online and browse through the books that are available for check-out without ever stepping foot into the library. Their library's Web presence also includes a section that allows students to write book reviews for books they have read. Students are able to read others' reviews and are exposed to books they might not typically read themselves.

Another way Fisher and Hill are using the Web to promote literacy is via online book clubs. Students do not always have the time to meet for a face-to-face book club so offering a virtual book club was the solution to the problem. Students can chat online about the books they are reading and share insights and opinions. As students read and discuss books, they are able to identify books they enjoy reading. Library media specialists promote literacy by using interactive online tools to help students read for pleasure.

Conclusion

Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning provides library media specialists with principles for learning and teaching. Principle ten states, “the library media program is an essential link to the larger learning community” (American Association of School Librarians 71). Library media specialists are providing that link by promoting literacy in the communities and schools where they work, and they also are forming collaborative partnerships to benefit the teachers and students they serve. Research demonstrates that library media specialists are using their library programs to promote literacy so the students they come in contact with will be literate individuals who are prepared for learning.

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION

While the stereotype of library media specialists as little old ladies who spend their entire day reading books to adoring classrooms of children has changed, the importance of promoting literacy has not (Braxton 22). Braxton also suggests that while the demands of library media specialists of today are more diversified than they were even ten years ago, the role of promoting literacy and helping to create a literature rich environment still rests primarily with library media specialists (22). Thinking about library media specialists as literacy leaders prompts questions about how this role is fulfilled and how it looks in action. What are library media specialists doing to promote literacy in their communities? How are library media specialists promoting literacy through a partnership with teachers? How is literacy promoted within the library? How is literacy promoted using the library Web page? The answers to these questions highlight how library media specialists are promoting literacy.

Promoting Literacy in the Community

Library media specialists are promoting literacy within their communities with the partnerships they are forming with their local public librarians. These partnerships expand students' access to books, magazines, online resources, and a number of other items available in the collection (MacDonald 11). School library media specialists are linking their online catalogs and databases with those of the public library (MacDonald 11). The students and staff they serve are no longer limited to what materials are housed in the physical space of their school libraries. They are now able to access more materials

than school budgets currently provide (Coulter 42). Bates and Webster believe the goal of both school and public libraries is to get books into the homes of the students and families they serve (48). This is happening through these partnerships.

School library media specialists are teaming up with public librarians to promote summer reading programs (Bates and Webster 49). Research indicates when students are involved in a summer reading program, their reading levels are improved and they are better prepared for school in the fall (Roman, Carran, and Fiore 20-21). By expanding access to materials, library media specialists are promoting literacy in the communities where they work.

Library media specialists also are promoting literacy within their communities by hosting family reading nights. Family reading nights look differently depending on where they are held, but the goal of these events is the same: students and parents actively engaged in a positive reading experience (Rehmer 16). Research has found that children whose parents read orally to them and further engage the children in discussion about what they have read together are more motivated to read (Kissinger 58). By hosting family reading nights, library media specialists are giving parents and students the opportunity to share books together (Chance 8). Parents are participating in their children's education and becoming more familiar with the library program in their children's schools (Rehmer 17). Literacy is fostered by parental interactions and interest (Kissinger 58). Library media specialists are promoting literacy in the community through their sponsorship of family reading nights.

Promoting Literacy through a partnership with Teachers

In today's education system, gone is the idea of a "one-size-fits-all" literacy program. Students who come to the library today have different backgrounds, both ethnically and educationally. Library media specialists are faced with promoting literacy to a diverse population of students. They are achieving this goal in a variety of ways. They are partnering with elementary teachers to increase students' reading scores (Beard and Antrim). Library media specialists also are working with high school teachers and students to help in the research process (Long; Meyer). They are collaborating with special education and ELL teachers to ensure this population of students are receiving literacy instruction to make them successful readers.

A study done in a fifth grade classroom showed a positive outcome in students' reading scores when the library media specialist collaborated with the classroom teacher (Beard and Antrim). The library media specialist assisted below reading level students when they selected their reading books. The students received guidance from the library media specialist on what would be an appropriate book for them to read. As the school year progressed the students who worked with the library media specialist were motivated to read and were able to select books that were both of interest to them and that they were able to read and understand. Library media specialists promote literacy when they collaborate with classroom teachers to improve students reading ability.

Library media specialist Debora Long collaborated with the literacy coach and teachers within her building to promote literacy through the use of research tools. Teachers noticed their students lacked the necessary skills to do the required research in

their classes. Long collaborated to create a research template that students could use for any research project and in any subject. Students preferred using the template over traditional note-taking using pen and paper. Teachers were pleased with the quality of the students work. Literacy is promoted when library media specialists work together with teachers to create research tools that help students become more efficient at reading and learning.

In order to promote literacy to a class of special education students, library media specialist Dawn Blaum and special education teacher Cathy Bryant collaborated on a fairy tale unit that allowed the students to create their own fairy tales (Blaum and Bryant 34). In each step of the process, Blaum and Bryant were pleased to see how much each student was able to accomplish and the amount of enthusiasm they had for the project (Blaum and Bryant 35). They also were excited to see their students able to read their own stories. The outcome of this collaboration was increased literacy among a group of special education students. Blaum is an example of a library media specialist who is promoting literacy to a diverse population of students.

Library media specialists are promoting literacy to another diverse population, English language learners (ELL). Moorefield-Lang is a library media specialist who believes every student who enters her library needs to be served equally (Moorefield-Lang, Anaya, and Shirk 22). She collaborated with the ELL teacher and Spanish teacher in order to promote literacy among the growing number of ELL students in her school. They worked together to add more books to the Spanish collection within the library. Moorefield-Lang also hung up posters and signs in both English and Spanish. She even

learned Spanish herself so she could engage the Spanish-speaking students in conversations about what they like to read. Moorefield-Lang and the two teachers also felt it was important to have books at a variety of reading levels to help support each student's ability to gain reading fluency (Moorefield-Lang, Anaya, and Shirk 23).

Another library media specialist used karaoke as a means of helping ELL students become more literate (Patton 44). Students gained a new understanding of the words in the song lyrics and learned how to pronounce them properly. The students then got the opportunity to sing along with the karaoke machine in front of their peers. Both of these library media specialists are promoting literacy to the ELL students they serve.

Promoting Literacy within the Library

Library media specialists are working within their libraries to promote literacy to the students and teachers they work with. A 2001 study found the greater a student's access to reading material, the more the student would want to read (McQuillian and Au). Carianne Bernadowski, an author and educator, has found that students learn by observation and will model the same reading habits of the adults they observe (Bernadowski 28). She has found it is best for library media specialists to model how to read by being honest about their own reading preference and habits (28). Students need to know it is okay to stop reading a book they are not enjoying and instead, start the process of locating a book they will want to read for pleasure.

Library media specialists are promoting literacy within their libraries by promoting books via booktalks. Booktalks are short, attention-grabbing summaries of books delivered by the library media specialist (Cole 41). Booktalks help students locate

books that might be of interest them. Bernadowski recommends keeping records of the effectiveness of booktalks by tracking the circulation data on books after booktalks were given about them (42).

Literacy is also promoted by the implementation of free reading time. No matter what name is used for free reading, the idea is the same: set aside 10 to 15 minutes of time during the school day and allow students to read for pleasure. Stephen Krashen's research has determined that students who read for pleasure have a greater understanding of language and writing (42). Library media specialists promote literacy through their collection by providing material that enables students to read for pleasure.

Promoting Literacy with the Library Web Page

A 2009 survey revealed almost sixty-five percent of homes in the United States have broadband Internet access (Fox). Since so many students have access to the Internet both at home and at school, it makes sense to create a library Web page as a way to promote reading (Fisher and Hill 23). Fisher and Hill, two library media specialists, believe that by creating an interactive library Web page, library media specialists also are able to excite students about reading and learning (23). They suggest one way to promote literacy via a Web page is by subscribing to a chapter-a-day book club. By using this type of service, students can read one chapter from popular books as a way to hook them into reading the rest of the book. They also provide online book lists that include short summaries of the books. Students can browse the books that are available for check-out without ever stepping foot into the library. Fisher and Hill also have book or material request forms online so students and teachers can request material any time of day.

Allowing students the opportunity to post reviews of books they have read is another idea for promoting literacy online (Fisher and Hill 24). Students are able to share their honest opinions and other students can read these reviews and possibly be introduced to books they might not typically read. Fisher and Hill also believe in setting up online book clubs via the library Web page as a means of promoting literacy. Due to demands on students' time, they may not always be able to meet for a face-to-face book club. By offering an online version, students can still share interactions over books they have read (Fisher and Hill 24).

Lamb and Johnson also suggest using a library Web page as a place to post "how to" videos for tasks such as accessing the online catalog or accessing the online databases. By having this information online, students are able to access reading material when they need it. Literacy is promoted when students are able to find books they want to read and are able to get them from their school library. Library media specialists are promoting literacy when create an online Web page for their students and staff to use for this paper and provide instructions for how to use these and other resources available in the library.

Conclusion

Research has shown that students in today's schools are struggling to read at or on grade level and if this issue is not addressed, students will graduate from school lacking the reading skills they need to pursue higher education or vocational training (Wise 373). As Wise states in his concluding remarks, "We must work together to make every child a high school graduate who is prepared for college, work, and success in life. We owe

nothing less to our students and to our nation” (375). To ensure students are literate and prepared for the demands of their school career and beyond, there needs to be a literacy leader (Cart 12). Braxton believes when library media specialists promote literacy in the schools and communities where they work, they are being literacy leaders (26).

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