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SLM 509 Instructional Collaboration

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Preparing for the Interview- Questions and Strategies

In order to learn more about the school librarian's role in fostering instructional collaboration to better support educators' curriculum content and to support learners in the school community, four interviews were conducted. A list of questions and a list of possible strategies were created after considering the school librarian's roles-created by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL)- of Leader, Instructional Partner, Information Specialist, Teacher, and Program administrator. The roles and responsibilities of the school librarian were considered in light of The Shared Foundations of Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage, and the Domains of Think, Create, Share, and Grow. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the School Improvement Plan was unavailable and not taken into consideration for this assignment. While the following list was provided to all interview participants prior to the interviews, this list served merely as a guide for each conversation.

Questions

1. How is the school librarian used in your school? How can teacher/librarian collaboration be increased?

2. How can the school librarian improve learning?

3. What issues are the most pressing for your colleagues?

4. How are school librarians used as instructional partners and/or co-teachers in your school or district? Is there a collaborative model of instruction?

5. *How do school librarians foster communication and collaboration with stakeholders in the school community?

6. Are school librarians active participants in development, evaluation, and improvement of instructional and program resources?

*This question relates to the <u>possible primary partners</u> for instructional collaboration: classroom teachers, school librarians, parents, reading specialists, reading intervention teachers, math specialists, Specials teachers, PTA, and the nearest branch of Frederick County Public Libraries. This question also relates to <u>possible primary recipients </u>for instructional collaboration: learners in the school community and classroom teachers.

List of Possible Strategies

1. Can librarians support classroom teachers and meet librarian standards through Project-Based Learning?
2. How can the school schedule be altered so librarians have more flexibility for collaboration? Could there be "book check out" times during the week (instead of every day) so that librarians can spend more time in the classroom?
3. Could the school librarian support teaching state and national standards through co-teaching, station teaching, or parallel teaching using library resources?
4. How can the school librarian be involved in team planning? Can professional development days be used?
5. How can the school librarian incorporate social media to support classroom teachers when she cannot be physically present?

Interviews

Maria O'Toole, School Librarian at Carroll Manor Elementary School, Frederick County Public Schools

Why I Choose Her: Maria O'Toole was nominated in 2017 for the Maryland School Librarian of the Year Award. She achieved National Board Certification in 2018 and received Board of Education recognition on February 13, 2019.

School Background: The school library at Carroll Manor Elementary School (CMES) is on a fixed schedule. Maria O'Toole meets with each class, every week, for 40 minutes. During her class period, she teaches a library lesson featuring the *I Can* statements created by FCPS' Library Media Services. The *I Can* statements reflect the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) standards. Book check out is also part of the class period. The school library is used mostly as a Specials class for students and as a planning period for teachers.

Library in a Face-to-Face Model: In addition to the library being used as a Specials class, the CMES library schedule has pockets of time which allow the library to be used in additional ways. Extended blocks (additional library time) are provided for mostly above grade-level students. In the past, O'Toole has worked with students individually, in small groups, or with half a class on Project Based Learning assignments, while the classroom teaching reinforces grade-level standards in the classroom.

Library in a Virtual Model: O'Toole meets with all classes virtually every other week. She uses the off-weeks to pull books for students which can be picked up on-campus by families. O'Toole is able to be at all team meetings, for the first time in her career, through Google Meets. Currently, all Specials are assigned a grade-level for a four-to-six-week rotation, to support reading or

math goals. The objective is that through this collaboration, Specials classes will be supporting grade-level content areas.

What Collaboration Looks Like: O'Toole seldomly teaches with other teachers. On occasion she will teach half the class, while the classroom teacher teaches the other half of the class. Then they switch groups. Mostly, instead of collaborating, she tries to co-ordinate her lessons with what she knows the teacher is teaching in the classroom.

Obstacles and Suggested Opportunities/Activities:
- In a Face-to-Face learning model, O'Toole cannot attend team meetings, so she plans with teachers before school, during lunch, or after school.
- When O'Toole cannot be physically present to plan with teachers, she uses email, Twitter, or the Google Drive, to share how the library can support instruction.
- Often teachers are unaware of how the library can support classroom instruction. To build awareness, O'Toole plans her instruction so that when the teachers arrive to pick up their students, they can observe how her library lesson supports classroom instruction.

Most Impactful Moment (Aha): Maria O'Toole said, "When a teacher wants to work with you on a specific day or at a specific time, do everything in your power to make that happen. If the collaboration is successful, word will spread throughout the school that the school librarian is a valuable resource." This interview taught me that in order to build a reputation as an effective school librarian, the school librarian must be very accommodating for teachers.

Significant Takeaways:
- **Professional development days are pre-planned by the county.** O'Toole is unable to train teachers on how to most effectively use the library resources on professional development days, unless her library supervisor is involved in planning the training.
- **It is important to be familiar with the curriculum.** O'Toole plans units to accompany what the teacher is teaching in the classroom. For instance, O'Toole supports the third-grade fairy tale unit by having the students read world fairytales and research their country of origin.
- **Build close relationships with your colleagues.** Teachers must trust a librarian before they decide to work with him or her.
- **Teachers are under stress.** Virtual learning, assessments, and technology are the most pressing issues for O'Toole's collogues.
- **Ask the teacher what they are doing in the classroom.** Find a creative idea that aligns with classroom instruction and run with it. School librarians can help improve learning by offering unique learning opportunities students would not get in the classroom.
- **Use the outside community.** O'Toole works with the PTA to promote summer reading initiatives, runs parent/child book clubs, and works with the local public library.
- **Advertise what you are doing.** Show any student videos during the morning announcements. Let the school know what is happening in your library.
- **Sacrifice is worth it.** Sometimes it is worth giving up your own personal planning time to plan, collaborate, or team teach with classroom teachers.

How I Want to Grow:
- O'Toole is viewed as a technology specialist. I want to grow in my knowledge of educational technology in order to support students and teachers.
- O'Toole is viewed as an expert in digital citizenship, plagiarism, creating bibliographies, and understanding how to correctly cite information. I want to grow in my knowledge of these areas so that I can teach these lessons for classroom teachers.

Ann Duncan, School Librarian at Walkersville Middle School, Frederick County Public Schools

Why I Choose Her: Ann Duncan is a Vanguard teacher. She was a 2015 Teacher of the Year Nominee. She was nominated for the Maryland School Librarian of the Year Award in 2017. She was highly recommended by Frederick County Public Schools' Library Media Services Supervisor.

Background: Walkersville Middle School's library is on a flexible schedule, allowing Ann Duncan to spend more time collaborating with teachers and supporting classroom content curriculum. Duncan believes she is a more effective school librarian because she was first a classroom teacher. She taught kindergarten, third-grade, and fifth-grade before becoming an elementary school librarian. She then moved to Walkersville Middle School. She serves on the Personalized Learning (PL) committee and is the Race and Diversity Liaison. She supports Universal Design for Learning, is an expert in providing information to students and teachers on copyright, helps with Standards-Based grading, supports teachers in technology such as Pear Deck and Padlet, creates screencasts for PL, and creates specific screencasts for teachers on request. Duncan is a life-long learner and is currently reading three books about improving instruction. She is part of a Specials meeting on Fridays where she looks at data, discusses students, discusses PL, and discusses ways to support teachers.

Library in a Face-to-Face Model: Walkersville Middle School's library is a busy place. The morning announcements are Duncan's favorite part of the day. Students arrive at 7:30 a.m. to begin getting prepared. At 8:00 a.m., the announcements begin and are soon over at 8:10 a.m. Next, the first class may come in, she may be doing administrative work, or she may have a meeting to attend. Duncan supports Sixth-Grade learners at the beginning of the year, by introducing them to the library, and explaining how book exchange works. Students are able to come in at any time and exchange a book, with permission from their classroom teacher. Duncan runs three books clubs- a Sixth-Grade book club, a genre book club, and a Project Lit book club. Students come back in the afternoon to finish working on the next day's morning announcements.

Library in a Virtual Model: Duncan created a call center to provide assistance during distance learning. Students and parents can call during the school day and a specialist will be available to answer questions. At the beginning of the year, there were lots of questions about how to get on Schoology and how to follow the directions. Duncan supports students and faculty with IT issues, helps with PL meetings, has a Schoology Media group, and helps create book boxes for students. She supports English Language Arts (ELA) teachers on Google Meets by leading break-out groups for their Spooky Storytime where she is helping to teach about theme. She created First Chapter Fridays, where she records a chapter on Hoopla to which students may listen. Over the summer she ran three virtual book clubs to keep students interested in reading.

What Collaboration Looks Like: Duncan collaborates with teachers to support student learning in a variety of ways. She likes to use a flex rotation blended learning model with the classroom teacher. She may have a research project at her station where students learn how to cite sources and learn about copyright. Duncan may have a real-time writing station where students are creating fractured fairy tales, discussing theme, or working on descriptors at her station. She may also offer real-time assessments at her station to help improve students' writing skills. Duncan typically works with ELA teachers in the library. However, she also supports Science and Social Studies teachers. Recently, she planned a two-week unit on Plate Tectonics, which was taught in the library using blended learning to support both content and library standards.

Obstacles and Suggested Activities:
- **Lack of time for collaboration.** The librarian must not be viewed as just a Specials teacher for teachers' planning time. When she was an elementary librarian, the K-2 classes were on a fixed schedule, and the 3rd-6th grade classes were not on a fixed schedule. This provided collaboration time and opportunities for team-teaching with those 3rd-6th grade teachers.
- **Misunderstanding about standards.** Teachers and librarians must understand that both of their standards can work together.
- **Under-estimating resources.** It is important to use stakeholders in the community to support the school library. Duncan uses the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) president and the local library to foster a community of reading. With the local library, Duncan was able to get Student Success cards issued to students to assist them in checking out books from the public library.

Most Impactful Moment (Aha): Duncan explained that it is important for school librarians to build trust with the faculty. She suggested making connections with the teachers in the lunchroom, at happy hours, or at cookouts. School librarians must take an interest in what teachers are teaching. Look at their standards, look at the library standards, and come up with an idea that can be taken to the classroom teacher that supports the standards of both roles/positions. Sell the idea and say, "What if we did this?" If you do an amazing job, not only will that particular teacher come back, but the word will spread throughout the school that the school librarian is a wonderful resource. This interview helped me to realize the importance of the school librarian approaching teachers with collaboration ideas.

Significant Takeaways:
- The school librarian can help improve learning by being an instructional leader in the school and by introducing the newest trends to teachers.
- Duncan improves learning at her school by personalizing learning for her students. She finds new ways to re-teach concepts the students are learning in the classroom.
- The most pressing issue for her colleagues is that there is not enough time. Duncan believes that we rush children too much in education.
- While she is very busy supporting teachers, some teachers are more willing to be supported than others.
- We have to get students excited about reading. We must create a culture of reading.

How I Want to Grow:
- I want to grow in my knowledge of IT, so that I can better support students and teachers.
- I want to grow in my knowledge of curriculum content standards, so as to better support teachers with instruction.

Ashely Philemon, Fifth-Grade teacher at Valley Elementary, Frederick County Public Schools

Why I Choose Her: Ashely Philemon was nominated for teacher-of-the-year by her peers at North Frederick Elementary School. She is planning to apply for the Vanguard program. She is interested in finding effective ways to discuss our country's racial issues in the classroom. She is also learning how to teach in a fully virtual model. She is eager to collaborate with a school librarian.

Background: Ashley Philemon is in her tenth teaching year. She holds a Master's of Science in Education (MSEd) with a concentration in Elementary Math.

Using the Library in a Face-to-Face Model: Philemon's students attend weekly media classes. Occasionally, the school librarian will support classroom content in the library.

Using the Library in a Virtual Model: Her students attend a Google Meets media class every other week. In the alternating week the students are expected to follow a pre-planned lesson which is posted on-line, giving the school librarian more time to pull books for students which they can pick up at the school.

What Collaboration Looks Like: Philemon has never thought much about collaborating with the school librarian. She thought the school librarian was there only to help kids with research skills, to help them find books, and to find just right books for their learning level. Occasionally, she will ask the school librarian to pull books for her. She once had a school librarian show her a research organizer and show her how to use a database. While she feels that the librarian is approachable, Philemon has never had an opportunity to do Project-Based Learning, parallel teaching, blended learning, or station rotation teaching with a school librarian. She is eager for this opportunity because she believes collaborating with the school librarian will allow for more student voice and choice in their projects.

Obstacles and Suggested Activities:
- **Time:** As elementary school librarians and classroom teachers do not have time to work together, Philemon is willing to give up a planning period occasionally to team-teach with the librarian in the library.
- **Unaware:** Philemon was unaware that school librarians could support her classroom content in the library. She was unaware that the school librarian could help her find resources that she could use in the classroom. School librarians must advertise how they can support classroom teachers. School librarians must also communicate how they can use the American Association of School Librarian (AASL) standards to both support content standards and to support learners. Philemon was also unaware that the school librarian would be willing to teach with her. She is excited about this opportunity for collaboration.
- **Resources:** Philemon was unaware of all the resources available in the library that would support her curriculum standards. She was unfamiliar with the digital resources and print

resources available which would help students have more ownership in their learning. She is willing to use these resources if a school librarian introduces them to her.

Most Impactful Moment (Aha): Philemon enthusiastically agreed to occasionally give up one of her planning periods, to team-teach a lesson with the librarian, and to support collaboration between the classroom and the library. We discussed how she could help kick-off a unit that the school librarian could then teach to support classroom content. This interview showed me that teachers are eager to collaborate with school librarians if given the opportunity.

Significant Takeaways:
- Elementary classroom teachers are willing to work with school librarians, but do not know that it is an option.
- Elementary classroom teachers want librarians to help them plan authentic and personal learning experiences for their students.
- School librarians can help to increase student learning by explaining to teachers the different ways through which they can support teachers and students.
- Elementary classroom teachers are adapting to the virtual learning model. In the classroom, teachers are having to manage socio-emotional needs of the students at an increasing rate, while also meeting educational needs for each individual student. Classroom teachers must tailor instruction to meet their students' needs, while also creating opportunities for voice and choice— which affords students more agency over their learning.

How I Want to Grow:
- I want to find resources that will support the Fifth-Grade curriculum.
- I want to find resources that will support distance learning.
- I want to find resources that tactfully helps educators discuss the racial tensions in our country.

Eric Haines, Administrator, Frederick County Public Schools

Why I Choose Him: Eric Haines is an administrator dedicated to teaching educators how to foster learning environments which increase student choice and ownership over their learning.

Background: Eric Haines is the project manager for Personalized Learning and an administrator in the Curriculum, Instruction, and Innovation Department in Central Office in Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS). He also leads the Vanguard program for FCPS.

Using the Library in a Face-to-Face Model: At the elementary level, the school library is used as a Specials class similar to Art or Music with the purpose of providing teachers either personal planning time or team planning time. At the elementary level, school librarians are also used as an expert in resources, copyright guidelines, and digital citizenship. At the secondary level, the school librarian is part of a team of specialists upon which the administration relies on to help with decision making.

Using the Library in a Virtual Model: The school librarian teaches through Google Meets media classes and supports students, teachers, and families with technology and information resources.

What Collaboration Looks Like: At the elementary level true collaboration and team-teaching between the classroom teacher and the school librarian is very difficult. At the secondary level, some teachers will simply expect the school librarian to teach the lesson independently. Haines said it is difficult to get secondary teachers to want to teach with the school librarian. The school librarian must explain to teachers how he or she can assist teachers and support student learners in the classroom, in the library, or by providing library resources.

Obstacles and Suggested Activities:
- **Media center as a Special.** At the elementary level, when taught by the school librarian, the media class allows teachers to have a planning period. If the school library is not used as a Specials course, then what replaces it? Haines said in small counties, an administrator or another faculty member could possibly fill that void. However, in a large county like Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS), that is not a realistic solution. At the elementary level the school library must remain a Specials class.
- **Changing Students.** Over the past ten years, students have been changing and as a result so has instruction. Students were using technology at home and not at school. There was a disconnect between these two environments. Schools have increased their use of technology, causing students to no longer feel split between two worlds. However, teachers must continue to incorporate new technology into instruction.
- **Personalization.** Students live in an on-demand world. With Netflix, Disney Plus, and Amazon at their fingertips, students are accustomed to getting what they want, when they want it, immediately. They are in the habit of choosing what they want to watch or buy instantly. Everything around them is customized and can be accommodated to their specific requests. In school, students now need more choices in their education. They need to be taught in a way where they can make real choices, not just differentiate the product. Teachers can change the pacing and how they want the students to learn the information. Students could choose a computer program, a video, have a news article read to them, read a library book, etc. Students should also have a way to map out their learning in their day or week. He suggests using a blended learning model like a playlist or a station rotation system where the stations must reflect different leaners.
- **Library space.** The library must be physically welcoming to teachers and students. The school librarian must make the library attractive to students through the placement of couches, desks, and chairs, and opportunities to use Makerspace or a 3D printer. School librarians should take advantage of the library space. School librarians could bring two classes into the library to support more teachers for a special lesson.

Most Impactful Moment (Aha): Eric Haines asked me a tough question. He asked, "If you were a principal and you were given an extra teaching position to use in any way you wanted, how would you use it? Would you hire an extra art teacher, so that the media center is available to collaborate with teachers? Or would you hire an extra reading specialist, reading intervention teacher (to support struggling readers), a math specialist, or an extra classroom teacher to reduce class sizes?" He said due to the concern principals face regarding math and reading scores, principals would most likely hire extra teachers to support those subject areas. This interview underscored the importance of collaborating with teachers outside of their planning periods.

Significant Takeaways:

- **Teachers must want to work with you.** If working with the school librarian creates more problems than it solves for the teachers, then teachers will not want to work with the librarian. Teachers have a lot on their plate. If the school librarian can take more off the teachers' plates or help them get their job done, then the teachers will want to work with the librarian. If working with the school librarian feels like just one more thing to do, then teachers will not want to collaborate. If the school librarian helps a teacher to plan lessons for the upcoming week, then the teacher will tell everyone in the building that the school librarian is a valuable asset.

- **Students must learn more working with you.** Do students learn more being with the school librarian? Teachers want to see that the school librarian adds value to student learning.

- **Equitable resources.** According to Haines, the school librarian at one elementary school cannot be used differently than at another elementary school. Since FCPS is a large system, individual principals cannot make too many changes outside of how the rest of the system operates in order to keep resources equitable.

- **Reading and math standards are the most important to most administrations.** Administrators are not deeply concerned about the AASL standards because these standards do not impact state assessments.

- I**n Frederick County, it is the local board of education (and not the state of Maryland) which controls what students learn.** However, because FCPS students take Maryland state exams, the curriculum in aligned to meet the state standards.

- **Educators are facing many issues.** Currently, educators are grappling with virtual learning— including the use of current technology in both designing and presenting lessons which allow student choice.

How I Want to Grow:

- I want to grow in learning how to support classroom teachers even if the schedule does not permit.
- I want to grow in my knowledge of blended learning through station rotation and playlists in order to give students more choice over their learning.

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