Charles\_3\_5\_CollaborationPlan\_5564

October 3rd, 2009

Catalina Charles

**Collaboration Plan**

**Part I:**

Collaboration is the act of working with other individuals to meet an agreed upon goal. This joint effort must include mutual respect, trust and a shared vision. For the school librarian, this union with other individuals can occur between herself and other teachers, students, administrators, parents and community members. When collaboration occurs between teachers and the librarian, the goal is to increase student-learning outcomes. Teachers who collaborate with librarians understand the value of teamwork. “Collaboration most frequently occurs when the librarian is perceived by teachers to be an educational leader” (Milbury 30). Much has been written about the importance of collaboration in increasing student learning. This will be one of the most important collaborative efforts for librarians in a school library. These efforts are accomplished through persistence on the librarian’s part.

Not all teachers will wish to collaborate with you because it is seen as extra work. Offering your assistance and resource ideas is a good place to start with teachers. Lack of communication and negative attitudes can lead to poor collaborative efforts so I encourage librarians to reach out to teachers who share a similar vision. Another factor, which can cause a bump in the road to collaboration, is the amount of time that it requires. The others will hopefully come around in time when they see how your collaboration helped the teachers who have worked with you.

Collaborating with administrators will also be of great benefit to the school librarian. These relationships should be developed in order to gain support for the library program and share what the program is capable of doing for the school community. Toor and Weisburg recommend fostering teacher and student relationships before reaching out to a principal. (Toor and Weisburg 103) Collaboration with the principal is accomplished through open communication and serving on various committees to put yourself and your ideas out there. Sharing your ideas regarding teacher collaboration can also help to expand your reach (Hickel 30). If the principal likes your ideas, she may have a greater influence over teachers to encourage them to work with you. She may also have input to help you improve your ideas. One obstacle to collaboration with the principal is time. The principal is a very busy individual and therefore your communications must be planned. Get your point across quickly and sufficiently.

Collaborating with students can also be very helpful to your program. Greeting students with a smile and respect will help to gain their trust (Toor and Weisburg 69). Once you have them on your side, behavior issues will be kept to a minimum and therefore class time will run more smoothly. You wont be spending as much time on classroom management and will have more time to devote towards teaching your students. If you begin with respect, it will flow from student to student as time progresses.

**Part II:**

The most effective way to begin collaboration in my opinion is to develop good strong relationships with the individuals in the school environment. Recognition of individuals by name helps to develop relationships. Take the yearbook home if you are a new SLMS and study it. Gaining support for your ideas will generate interest from others who may not be on board from the beginning of your efforts. If you are able to gain support from the principal in the beginning, she can assist in preparing teachers to collaborate with you. I would approach the principal in the first few weeks with my ideas for collaboration. Offering teachers resources before they have approached you to collaborate is a good way to show that you are an educational leader. These things should begin at the start of the school year within the first month of classes.

Once relationships are beginning to be established, I would begin reaching out the teachers through newsletters and individual notes to show them my willingness to collaborate for the good of the students. I would also promote my ideas at staff meetings and various committee meetings that I serve on. I would offer various medias through which to convey my ideas such as print newsletters and online resources. I would start conversations with teachers I know are interested in collaboration about how I can help enhance their lessons. I would do this in the second month of the school year. Hopefully I will have some takers and collaboration can begin.

Once collaboration begins with a few teachers I will encourage them to spread the word! If a positive experience has occurred with the collaborating teachers, I may even ask them to write a short piece to add to one of my newsletters for the rest of the staff on how collaboration helped them. I would continue this for the rest of the school year and hope to work with as many teachers as time will permit. Reflection on all the collaborative lessons is essential to success. Keeping an ongoing collaboration record will be a valuable resource to reflect upon as well as share with collaboration skeptics to get them on-board!

Members of the community will add an extra element to your success as a school librarian. Involve willing volunteers in your program and they will stand by you when you need them. Having an influential community member in your corner can be a benefit when advocating for the program or for funds to support the program. Parental support is a true asset to a school librarian. Having support from members of the community can aid you in swaying opinions in your favor when necessary. Fostering these relationships should occur throughout the school year.

Works Cited

Hickel, Dorain. “A Formula for Achieving Collaboration.” *Library Media Connection*

Nov/Dec. 2006: 30-31. Ebsco. Web. 2 Oct 2009.

Milbury, Peter. “Collaboration.” *Knowledge Quest* May/June 2005: 30-32. Ebsco.

Web. 2 Oct 2009.

Toor, Ruth and Hilda K. Weisburg. *New on the Job: A School Library Media Specialist’s*

*Guide to Success*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2007. Print.