Chapter 1

Administration:
Making a Connection with the Library's Strongest Advocate

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ABSTRACT

It is an interesting time to be a school librarian! The Common Core State Standards are changing the way school librarians look at their collections and support their teachers. The need for students to develop digital literacy skills requires school librarians to not only be adept at choosing materials but also agile in the world of technology, while the greater emphasis on teacher evaluations is pushing librarians to look critically at their own teaching practices. In addition to this, budgets are being slashed, and librarians are losing their jobs due to tough fiscal times. It is now crucial for the library to be the central hub of the building, and for the librarian to be an essential part of the building staff. By making a connection with the building administration, a librarian can become vital to the successful operation of a school. Collaborating with administration is a natural way to expand the work that librarians do and offers many benefits to the librarian, and as a result, to the students.

WAYS THAT COLLABORATING WITH ADMINISTRATION CAN SUPPORT THE LIBRARY

Student Growth

The ultimate goal of any school is to have students grow in their learning and understanding of the world. The school library plays an integral role in this advancement; it serves as a place where students can expand their learning, as well as acts as a connector to a student's adult life by teaching how academic libraries meet the needs of college students and how public libraries serve the same role to adults in the greater community. School administration strives to create a cohesive plan for student achievement as they put together schedules, plan professional development and act as instructional leaders of their buildings. If administrators work closely with the librarian, the library will be embedded into that administration's plan for the building. As a result, both teachers and students will view the librarian as an individual who is vital to the learning culture of the school and the academic achievement of all students. This notoriety offers school librarians the chance to

promote their work while encouraging teachers to collaborate more often. When the library is built into the vision of how administration believes the school should be run, the library becomes a central and necessary hub in the building.

Key Contact for District Initiatives

As the librarian works more closely with the building principal, he or she fosters a tight bond between the two positions. Along with perceiving library initiatives as integral components in the planning and execution of building administration, the principal will come to value the librarian as an asset when implementing new initiatives. This distinction proves very useful to a librarian as he or she works to build the school library program. Building administration is charged with taking the goals and strategic plan of the school district or county and translating these into local level implementations. In each building, this can be accomplished in different ways. If the librarian has a strong, collaborative relationship with the principal, the administrator will look to the library as a place to launch these new initiatives. This works well for the librarian for two reasons: first, the library will always be at the forefront of what is happening in a building, usually having a voice in how an initiative is implemented. Second, the library will become a gathering place for teachers who are looking for their place within the organization's plan.

Leadership Capacity

In general, a librarian's role has much in common with the role of an administrator: both experience isolation because of the nature of their work. Both work with teachers to meet the goal of student achievement, and they both serve as managers, one of the library and the other of the building. The positions can have a natural camaraderie as those serving in each role develop some understanding of the work of the other. As the collaboration

between librarian and administration is strengthened, and the librarian assumes a primary role in many of the important events taking place in the building, mutual appreciation between the library and administration can increase. This mutual appreciation allows for expanded opportunities for the librarian, whether it is to lead professional development, serve on a task force, or work with district level groups as a learned representative of the teaching staff. This expanded and highly visible role can build the librarian's confidence as well as impact teacher colleagues' perceptions of the value of the school library program.

Principal preparation programs in the nation's colleges and universities do not instruct building and district leaders in the benefits of collaborating with librarians. Thus, it falls to the school librarian to become a program leader, sharing library program information, or leveraging it in order to make those connections for building and district leadership. While some administrators will inherently understand the benefits of a school librarian as instructional leader, others will need to be shown what a powerful ally the library can be for school and district initiatives. Promoting oneself, and advocating for the library, are not new endeavors for librarians. In fact, leadership through advocacy is something that they have always done in order to grow strong library programs. However, this specific focus, looking to connect with the building administration, may be a new area for some. It is helpful for librarians to have a clear understanding of the benefits available to administration that connects with its library program. In this manner, librarians are prepared to share what they can do to promote the educational mission of the school.

Advocate for Library Programs and Budget

One area that truly impacts a school library is the availability of a strong budget. Even the best librarian will have a difficult time promoting a collection that is poor, hoping that teachers

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