

Chapter 2

School Librarian and Teacher Candidate Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

Change in teacher attitudes toward teacher-librarian collaboration begins in teacher preparation programs (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Through the assignment detailed in this chapter, teacher candidates prepared for teaching with a basic understanding that collaboration with school librarians could enhance their lessons. In turn, school librarian candidates engaged in a collaborative exercise, working with these future teachers. The authors describe the process for this collaborative project and present various rubrics, templates, and direction sheets used in the assignment. Qualitative responses and reflections on the collaborative experience are reported for both the teacher and school library candidates.

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between school librarians and teachers works as an important strategy for teaching students 21st Century Learner Skills: 1) inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge; 2) draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge; 3) share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society; and 4) pursue personal and aesthetic growth (American Association of School Librarians, 2007). School librarians have the expertise to incorporate technology into stimu-

lating lessons that will enhance scaffolding of information by the teachers. Because students will be engaged in these lessons, they can use what they know, apply it to new situations, and create new knowledge using technology. Students will be more likely to become lifelong learners when they have an administrator, teacher, and school librarian working collaboratively (Roberson, Applin, & Schweinle, 2005; Small & Snyder, 2010).

Changing teacher attitudes towards collaboration begins with teacher-preparation programs (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Although school librarians are taught the importance of collaboration, they often have to connect with

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teachers who may not have learned the value of collaborating with a school librarian. If we want teachers to collaborate with school librarians, we need to begin collaborative projects while they are preparing to become teachers (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). This knowledge led us to conduct research investigating collaboration between these two groups to see how the participants perceive the process.

In this chapter, we discuss our research and findings from our study looking at how graduate level school library candidates and undergraduate teacher candidates interpret a collaborative experience designing instructional materials together. The experience for the candidates involved collaborating to create an original WebQuest. We describe the rationale and process for this collaboration. Qualitative responses and reflections on the collaborative experience are reported for the teacher and school library candidates. We present various rubrics, templates, and direction sheets used in the assignment in the Section 2: Field Guide. Data gathered indicate that both groups of candidates gained insights into the process and value of the collaboration.

COLLABORATION DEFINED

There are many perceptions of collaboration. Some believe that if books are brought on a cart to the classroom, the school librarian has collaborated with the teacher. Collaboration is more than coordinating resources, brief encounters for discussing units, or pulling resources for a unit of study. David Loertscher defines collaboration as the teacher and the school librarian bringing together materials, information, and information technology to enhance a learning activity (Peterson, 1999). Collaboration is a process in which the teacher and the school librarian plan together, each with a stake in the outcome. The process of collaboration involves equally sharing the goals

and objectives of a unit, deciding what resources will provide information and understanding, sharing the expertise and skills of both teacher and librarian, and determining how to assess for student learning. Collaboration should improve on the construction and delivery of the unit, enhancing the lesson.

Collaboration does not need to be an extensive unit of study comprising several weeks of work in the library. Oftentimes, the best collaboration is a small assignment that allows the teacher and the librarian to get to learn the lesson content and the skills of each party. Collaboration need not be formal. When informal evaluation and feedback occur, there is a less threatening environment, allowing educators to act as impromptu mentors to each other (Marcoux, 2007). Collaboration often starts with a short lesson and then blossoms into collaboration that builds with each year and new assignment.

Collaboration is not a natural activity. It works best when there is a school culture with an encouraging environment that promotes sharing, trust, positive interpersonal relations, and support for collaboration (Williamson, Archibald, & McGregor, 2010). Collaboration fosters student achievement and makes creating and delivering the lesson more enjoyable for both student and teacher (Kaplan, 2010; Roberson, Applin, & Schweinle, 2005; Schwelik & Fredericka, 2011; Small & Snyder, 2010).

IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

The American Association of School Librarians' *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (2007) encourages school librarians to take an active role in creating collaborative lessons in an effort to expand the teacher's expertise. The principles of the standards lend themselves to collaborative efforts. Inquiry is important if students are to possess the skills necessary to take information

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