

PROMOTING THE PROFESSION FROM WITHIN

by Mary Poston Watkins



Ask yourself the following two questions:

1. Does anyone in your school really have any idea on what it takes to run the school media center?
2. How can we interest students in our profession?

These are questions I ask myself on a regular basis. Last spring, I challenged myself to find an answer that would address both questions.

While contemplating the above questions, I developed a nine-week elective for middle school students, but the elective would work at any grade level. Class size is limited to ten students. At Yorktown Middle School, electives are scheduled the last period of the day. The purpose of the elective is two fold:

1. Promote the profession, and
2. Foster respect for the media center by developing a better understanding of what is involved in the daily operations.

For middle school students, four problem areas were targeted: attention span, problem solving skills, memory, and work ethic. The center does close occasionally to provide student training. The following educational strategies are used: lecture, one-on-one instruction, discussion, cooperative learning, conflict resolution and directed learning.

The syllabus states that although no specific text is used, the course will use the Nine Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning as its foundation. Students work individually, in teams of two, and in a group to provide services to library patrons. Those services include but are not limited to circulating materials; technical services (processing and laminating); conducting traditional and online research; developing new materials such as but not limited to spreadsheets, flyers, service logs, signs, request forms; and providing duplication services.

Periodically, students are called together to problem solve and trouble shoot, review the standards, set goals and assess their roles in providing library services. Class time is given to develop thinking and reasoning skills. Students discussed and voted on offering addi-

tional services to teachers, such as running copies for teachers, making bulletin boards, and trimming lamination.

Students developed the patron forms for requesting services. Students sign the service form before beginning work. This immediately identifies the student responsible for the project. All duplicated materials are checked before being delivered to teachers. If done incorrectly, the student must do the job again.

EVALUATION

The following criteria are used for student assessment:

- Participation – how well the student contributes and interacts with the class.
- Works with Others – see Student Handout titled Working with Others.
- Time on Task – completes the duty assigned.
- Patron Service – helps others and is polite.
- Work Ethic – dependability, attitude, works to potential, demonstrates initiative.

Students receive 10 points weekly in each category. Tests and quizzes are optional and can be given at the instructor's discretion. Beginning each grading period, students are given the syllabus, Information Literacy Standards, and several handouts.

During the first two or three weeks students are trained in all areas of library services. Then students are assigned stations on a rotating basis. This schedule is written in their agendas, and it is their responsibility to know when and where to rotate. The Media Services students take their jobs very seriously. It truly amazes me when a student will ask, "Will you please have someone else run that errand, I need to finish this job."

So, in reality how successful is the class? Quite simply, it has exceeded my expectations. These middle school students want to help and truly want to do a good job. The problem of accountability was solved by having students sign a service form prior to starting a job. At the end of the first nine weeks, I had the first

class develop job descriptions. Each succeeding class edits and revises the job descriptions as needed.

Another reality is that working with ten students might allow you to provide better services during that period, but it does not allow you to get additional work done. Middle school students need to be supervised, not only the patrons but also the media services students!

STUDENT HANDOUT SKILLS CHECKLIST

Thinking and Reasoning Handout

- Uses “if, then, not and or” in the thinking process
- Understands that information can help in making good decisions
- Understands that personal values influence conclusions
- Recognizes that several conclusions can be drawn from the same information
- Can explain their thought processes in making a decision
- Explores the impact decisions and policies can have on library patrons

Decision Making Handout

- Identifies situations in the library in which a decision is required
- Secures factual information needed to evaluate alternatives
- Identifies the values underlying the alternatives that are considered and the criteria that will be used to make the selection
- Predicts the consequences of selecting each alternative
- Makes decisions based on the data obtained
- When appropriate, takes action to implement the decisions
- Analyzes personal decisions in terms of the options that were considered

Working with Others Handout

- (A) Contributes to the effort of a group
- Identifies what is not working
 - Demonstrates respect for others
 - Recognizes and uses the strengths of others
 - Takes initiative
 - Identifies the causes of conflict
 - Helps meet goals
 - Engages in active listening
 - Keeps request simple

- Contributes to the group in a positive manner

(B) Works well with diverse individuals and situations

- Works well with the opposite gender
- Works well with different ethnic groups
- Works well with those of different religious orientations
- Works to satisfy needs of patrons
- Displays a willingness to work with others

(C) Displays effective interpersonal communication skills

- Discusses concerns with Mrs. Watkins as needed
- Displays friendliness with others
- Is polite to others
- Seeks information
- Is not bossy

Leadership Skills Handout

- Occasionally serves as a leader
- Occasionally serves as a follower
- Is trustworthy, reliable, and dependable
- Enlists others in working towards a shared vision-good library service
- Compliments others
- Celebrates accomplishments
- Recognizes others
- Offers to help
- Checks with Mrs. Watkins as needed

Work Ethic Handout

(A) Dependability

- On time
- Is organized/ has handouts in binder
- Completes projects on time
- Brings needed materials

(B) Attitude/Personal Best

- Cooperative
- Respectful to all
- Integrity
- Knows right from wrong
- Is an active listener
- Is flexible

(C) Initiative

- Effort
- Accepts responsibility
- Uses time wisely
- Is a problem solver

TEACHER FEEDBACK

“I am so impressed with your students! They come right into the library and get busy. You don’t even have to say anything to them.”

Kelly Brown, 6th grade Teacher

“The time your students have saved me is unbelievable! Now I have more time to do what I do best, and that is to teach.”

Heath Dudley, 6th grade Teacher

“This class has really been helpful. I now can get all my papers run by the students and I can spend time on science.”

Dan Watkins, 7th grade Science teacher

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“I thought Library Media Service was a great class. It taught me communication skills and how to work with other people. It takes hard work and patience to be in the class and you have to listen to directions. Over all the class was a lot of fun and I learned a lot from it.”

Erin Brumback, 8th grader

“I think this class was fun because you got to work with the copy machines and there was no homework.”

Zach Thomas, 8th grade

“I thought this class was wonderful! You get to experience many different things. You also have to work with others and learn how to work as a team.”

Katrina Ippel, 7th grade

“What I liked about this course was meeting other people that I did not know. I would recommend this course to anyone. We had a lot of different people in this class, which made it interesting. I also liked the different rounds we did each week. It helped us to find out how hard it really is to work in a library.”

Jill Nowakowski, 7th grade

“This course is pretty easy. All you need to do is have a great attitude and pay attention! There is no homework and it is like study hall, but you are active. You get to deliver things to other people.

Aaron Heorst, 8th grade

SELECTED STUDENT TASK LISTS

Computer Log In*

1. After students check in, they come to the Computer Log In if they need to use a computer.
2. Have students tell you what they need. (Internet, Printing, OPAC)
3. VERY IMPORTANT!!!!!!! If a student needs to save their work, he or she must restart the computer and log on to his or her student account.
4. If students need the Internet, they must have their Agenda.
5. Tell them to open their Agenda to page 21.
6. Check to make sure the students have their Internet ID.
7. Make sure to write down the ID Letter after assigning them to a computer.
8. Students do NOT need their Agenda for OPAC.
9. Seat students where you can watch the monitors.
10. Absolutely no email or chat rooms.
11. If a student needs to email a website or Power Point project, he or she must speak with Mrs. Watkins.
12. Every Wednesday, clean off the monitor screens.
13. See Mrs. Watkins for supplies.
14. Walk around and look at monitors, if you see something that doesn’t look appropriate, get Mrs. Watkins at once.
15. You are not a policeman, but it is very important to watch the screens.
16. If students leave the computer, check the box that says “OUT.”
17. Computers with a red stop sign are not working.
18. On Thursdays, using the ID Letter, write down which computer is not working.
19. Mrs. Watkins will show you how to report non-working computers.
20. If you have trouble, see Mrs. Watkins.
21. Inform students when they only have 5 minutes left.
22. Every day at 2:40, turn off all computers!

** This job description was designed by the students in the 1st Media Services class.*

Copy Room*

1. Know which machine to use for each job.
2. Use the Risograph for more than 20 copies.
3. Get daily jobs from the task basket.
4. Check the due date on each form. Do the projects needed for the next day first.
5. Sign your name to the blue form. After signing your name, you are then responsible for the job.
6. If you have questions, check with Mrs. Watkins. If she is not sure, she will have you check with the teacher.
7. The stapler and 3-hole punch are kept in Mrs. Watkins' office. You must put them back on her desk at the end of each day.
8. If you cannot finish a job, put it on the bottom shelf of the cart in the copy room. Who ever signed the blue form is responsible for finishing the job the next school day.
9. If you have not finished a job and the next day is a rotation day, tell Mrs. Watkins when you come in and then finish the job before you rotate.
10. Some jobs are very large. If you need help, the person staffing Student Check In can either punch holes or staple. If you need additional help, use the person staffing the Back Room.
11. Make sure you check and recheck your work before having the Errand Runners deliver the materials.
12. If you have trouble, see Mrs. Watkins.

Errand Runners*

1. Know which day is your day to run errands.
2. Put on the ID first thing when class starts and let Mrs. Watkins know you are the runner.
3. Let Mrs. Watkins know when you have materials to deliver.
4. When running an errand, go directly to the destination and return to the Library immediately. Failure to do so, will result in losing the privilege of running errands.
5. Hand materials to the teacher.
6. If the teacher is not there, return to the Library with the materials.
7. Place the returned materials on the bottom shelf of the cart in the copy room to be delivered the next school day.
8. Always be polite, smile, and say "Thank you".
9. If you have problems, see Mrs. Watkins.

Lamination & Letter Machine*

1. Get daily jobs from the task basket.
2. Some laminating might be placed by the laminator, so check there also.
3. If there is something to laminate, turn the Power switch on.
4. The laminator takes 15-20 minutes to heat up.
5. When the yellow light turns green, the laminator is ready.
6. Before you laminate, remove the teacher's name from the material to be laminated.
7. Flip Monitor switch to run.
8. Count to 3 and feed the material in.
9. After the end of the material is through the roller, count slowly to 3 and feed in the next item.
10. When you are finished, turn off the Motor switch. You can leave the Power switch on until 2:40.
11. The last thing you do everyday is to make sure the Power switch is off.

Trimming Lamination:

1. After trimming, pick up all excess and place in wastebasket.
2. If you have a lot of trimming, the students staffing Student Check In and Processing can help.
3. If you have a lot of numbers or letters, ask Mrs. Watkins for an envelope.
4. Put any job that is not finished on the bottom of the cart in the copy room.
5. Finish the job the next school day.
6. Give the job to the errand runners to deliver.

Letter Machine:

1. The first thing every day check the order of the letters to make sure each block has been put away in the correct slot.
2. Check the task basket for daily jobs.
3. Sign your name to the white form. You are then responsible for the job.
4. Check off each letter after you cut it.
5. Clean up all scraps.
6. Put any job that is not finished on the bottom of the cart in the copy room.
7. Finish the job the next day.
8. Give the job to the errand runners to deliver.
9. Always put letter cuts away after use.
If you need help, see Mrs. Watkins

** This job description was designed by the students in the 1st Media Services class.*

Processing*

Processing Magazines:

1. Check the magazines off in the ledger.
2. Place a checkmark on the 1st or 2nd letter of the title.
3. Those with information on the spine get clear tape.
4. All others get the white tape on the spine.
5. Each white taped spine must be marked with the month.

1=Jan 4=Apr 7=Jul 10=Oct

2=Feb 5=May 8=Aug 11=Nov

3=Mar 6=Jun 9=Sept 12=Dec

6. Use the purple marker.
7. Cover spine info with a label protector.
8. Display new magazines in the blue binders.
9. Put the old magazines away in the magazine room.

Staffing the magazine room:

1. Help students when they want magazines.
2. Do NOT allow other students in the magazine room.
3. Put any magazines away that are in the wire basket.
4. The magazines are on the shelves alphabetically.
5. There is a listing by the door and inside the room of all magazines and the shelf it is on.

Assigning bar codes to the most popular magazines:

1. Students like to check out certain magazines.
2. Take the following magazines to the computer sitting on the desk behind the circulation desk:

Seventeen All car magazines

YM All Beckett's

3. Open the file folder that says Follet.
4. Select Cataloging.
5. Mrs. Watkins will teach you the rest.

Student Check In*

1. Check in all students coming into the Library with the exception of a scheduled class.
2. Mrs. Watkins will let you know if there is a scheduled class.
3. Study hall students stay the entire time unless their pass says otherwise.
4. Transfer all student names from the pass to the appropriate list.
5. Write so Mrs. Watkins can read it.
6. If you are not busy, you might be asked to trim lamination, punch holes, or shelve books.
7. Always keep your eyes on the entrance and the Check In desk.
8. Smile when patrons come in!
9. Bring a book or homework in case you have time to read.
10. If you have questions, see Mrs. Watkins.

** This job description was designed by the students in the 1st Media Services class.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Poston Watkins (mwatkins@yorktown.k12.in.us) is librarian at Yorktown Middle School in Yorktown.