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Getting to First Base

Developing Support from School Principals

Ken Haycock

Providing an adequate number and variety of materials is essential to the success of the program. Too often, teacher-librarians attempt to purchase a wide range of materials on a wide range of topics without sufficient depth and scope for those units where the library is used for resource-based learning.

Be Professional

Is it always necessary to ask for permission? Certainly involve the principal in the definition of your priorities, but you have to make final decisions as to what will be done for a particular group of clients in a particular situation. Recognize your integrity and exercise your professional judgment.

Involve the Administrator

Does the principal understand the function of the library and the role of the teacher-librarian? Have you discussed your role in co-operative program planning and teaching and your varying successes with different subject areas and grade levels? How has the administrator been implicated in the establishment of objectives and thus committed to their attainment? Has the administrator been invited to observe the program in the library? Has the administrator been encouraged to question prospective new teachers as to how they might involve the teacher-librarian in their program, and to question teachers currently on staff as to how they are using the library and its services in their teaching programs?

Confer Regularly

Every teacher-librarian should meet regularly with the school principal. These meetings are essential to ensure that time is available for communication, and that the administrator is routinely involved in program appraisal and improvement.

Communicate Effectively

Avoid library jargon and discuss goals and directions in the common language of education. What are your short and long range objectives? What is it specifically that you would like to accomplish this month, this year, this term? The library will not be perceived as an essential component of the school program unless it is viewed as integral to both teaching and learning.

Be Specific

What are the areas requiring attention? Where do you need assistance? Does the principal understand why a professional substitute is essential during the teacher-librarian's absence? There may be a requirement for additional clerical help, or a need for release time for a planning with teachers or for in-service. Be specific in your request and be sure to include the benefits that will accrue directly to the school program. Translate your budget into program terms. How much money is required to purchase book and non-book materials for each particular unit that you plan to team teach with a classroom teacher?

Most teacher-librarians have been faced with the challenge of stating the aims and objectives of the school library program to a school administrator and translating them into solid educational terms that are easy to understand and accept. There is no question that the principal is the key to the success of any school library program. Communicating with principals thus becomes a cornerstone for building support for new programs, as well as for accounting for existing levels of support. In order to develop an environment for support and assistance, a few guidelines are useful.

Plan a Strategy

Full information is crucial. Does the principal know and understand the role of the school library as fundamental to learning, as much a "concept of teaching" as a place in the school? Does he/she feel that the library is essential to the success of the school and to student achievement? At the very least, does he/she expect good service? If not, it is critical that a plan be prepared to explain the program. After all, where would this knowledge come from? It would certainly not come from the training institutions or professional literature, and it will rarely come from the school district. It must come from the teacher-librarian. It is also important to observe the communication links and patterns within the school to determine who most frequently has the principal's ear, and why this is so.

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Provide In-Service Opportunities

It is essential that the district provide in-service sessions for principals and teacher-librarians as partners in quality education. A one or two day program under recognized leadership will provide structured opportunities for discussion and examination of existing problems, and alternatives for their resolution. In-service programs also provide opportunities for an administrator to view the potential of the library from the perspective of his/her colleagues as well.

Be Visible

Make sure that the library is on the agenda for staff meetings, and that there are displays in the staff room

about services as well as new materials. Attention should be paid to displays and bulletin boards outside the school library as much as inside. After all, who would put a "for sale" sign in their living room rather than on their front lawn? Be involved with your teaching colleagues and display yourself and your services without the undue humility and modesty so characteristic of the profession.

Effective communication is the key to the development of successful school library programs. The administrator plays an important role in establishing an environment for the development and growth of important services. It should be recognized that school administrators often do not have as much information about

and experience with school libraries as is desirable. The future of school librarianship in Canada might very well rest with those who ensure that teachers become knowledgeable and experienced in planning and developing team-teaching units with teacher-librarians, integrating research and study skills in their programs. As long as we are willing only to react to teacher requests rather than to initiate co-operative programs, we are going to continue to have teachers without any knowledge of school library services promoted to positions of administrative responsibility, and we will wonder why we do not get the level of support that we require from these administrators.

Ken Haycock is co-ordinator of library services and supervisor of instruction for the Vancouver School Board, Vancouver, British Columbia, and the co-editor of *Emergency Librarian*.

President's Memo

Ted Monkhouse

As noted in my last column, CSLA members will be receiving a membership questionnaire, the results of which will allow the executive board to determine each member's place of residence, employment status and background, conditions of work, and access to support personnel. Other questions will cover the degree of freedom members have to attend conferences and workshops, the means of funding such activities, and the level of involvement in other organizations. One value of this information is that it will permit me to respond more specifically to members' concerns, and to improve communication within the CSLA.

I also pointed out in my previous column the executive board's efforts to restructure its organization in order to be more responsive to the membership. Numerous plans have been studied, some of which appear in this issue of *School Libraries in Canada* and await discussion at the June AGM. Financing the executive board meetings would be impossible under many of the plans submitted. The difference in the political makeup of the various provincial school library associations, and their lack of common affiliations, appear to make universal involvement in CSLA difficult or impossible for some.

I am proud to announce that the executive board has unanimously accepted as a policy statement *A Recommended Curriculum for Education for School Librarianship*, prepared by Liz Austrom, Dave Boettcher, Stan Copland, Gerry Gibb, Debbie Porteous, and Ken Haycock, convenor. This document will be printed

in the summer issue of *School Libraries in Canada*, and will be presented by Haycock at one of the CSLA conference sessions this June in Hamilton. The new policy builds on the competencies identified in the *CSLA Qualifications for School Librarians*. Initial response is very favorable and I anticipate a high level of acceptance across Canada, recognizing that adaptations may be necessary to allow for regional differences.

Adoption of the recommended curriculum will place the term "teacher-librarian" in the framework of an educational philosophy and training program. The term will then have a clear meaning for all CSLA members, as was the intention of the motion to adopt "teacher-librarian" passed at the 1980 CSLA AGM. As it stands now, the terminology is not acceptable across Canada. The CSLA could take a leadership role in adopting the term now, but it is the executive board's opinion that this move could be premature and would lessen the intended impact. Our history has shown that CSLA positions will only be recognized if all regions of Canada are ready to accept them. Our diversity can only be overcome through mutual understanding. "Teacher-librarian" probably will describe all of us eventually, but at present there is too much resistance.

The paper on networks, "Similar Futures: School Libraries and Networks," appears in this issue. It is a long awaited document and will be a focus of discussion at the provincial level as well as at the CSLA annual conference.

This January I represented CSLA at the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) invitational forum "Education for Life and Work" in Ottawa. I am also attending another CTF forum on "Multiculturalism in Schools" in April. It is gratifying to have this association with CTF, a natural affiliation considering our primary allegiance to education.

I hope that you are pleased with the new journal that the editorial board has worked hard to develop. Our problem has been CSLA's commitment to make *School Libraries in Canada* financially independent. A scheme for this has just been approved by the CLA board that involves financing through subscription sales, advertising, and other fund raising methods that we feel to be realistic. It will also mean that the executive board will be "under the gun" from now on to keep *School Libraries in Canada* alive.

This column outlines some of the items dealt with at the CSLA executive meeting in February. Committee reports, the selection of award winners, promotion and membership concerns, and professional development programming were but a few of the items wrestled with and resolved. Much is happening that is exciting for CSLA.

Ted Monkhouse is the educational media consultant on libraries for the Wellington County Board of Education, Guelph, Ontario, and is the 1980-81 president of CSLA.

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