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The School Librarian As A Professional Teacher

Ken Haycock

In the last fifteen years changes in education have been rapid and decisive. The traditional lock-step methods of teaching in small closed classrooms using limited instructional resources, mainly textbooks, have developed into more innovative approaches based on research related to children, teaching and learning. Due to changing environments and the information explosion, instruction now centres more on the process of learning itself than on subject content. It is becoming far more important that the student understands factors which contribute to a given situation than to memorize data describing it. The method of the subject specialist is of concern but specific knowledge of the field is less necessary. Discovery and inquiry methods of teaching are becoming increasingly common and contribute to the development of independent, disciplined learners who can recognize problems, formulate hypotheses, ask important questions, locate, analyze and evaluate information and reach valid conclusions.

Students are treated on a more individual basis as it is finally accepted that everyone does not learn in the same way or at the same rate. Each child is not necessarily following an individual program but efforts are made to correlate expected performance with individual ability levels to ensure realistic goals. Grouping of students is used to an increasing extent to match what is to be taught to those who need to learn it, whether it is a large group lecture to introduce facts or a small group work session to reinforce skills. These trends have also led to more independent study programs at all levels of education. The three R's (reading, writing, arithmetic) are still among the basic skills of schooling but the three I's (inquiry, individualization, independent study) represent an improved approach to teaching and learning.

School resource centres have been a vital part of these changes in education. Indeed, many innovations would not be possible without the services of a resource centre. As a reflection of these changes, emphasis has shifted from the traditional library base of selecting, organizing and circulating books to the more pronounced educational and teaching services

of planning for the effective use of book and nonbook media through program planning and co-operative teaching. If the resource centre has any validity whatever in the school it must be on this firm theoretical and educational foundation. Libraries per se are not seen as particularly significant in a formal educational context; the planned use of learning resources is, however. The development of the school library to a resource centre then represents more of a change in function than a change in name. The implications of educational research and the implementation of new programs have led to a need for a vital integral resource centre. With a strong movement towards more effective team work, professionals in schools need a common base of concern and understanding to exploit the full potential of instructional methods.

Traditionally, the person in charge of the school library has been called the school librarian; today, however, since all roles in education are being redefined in light of new trends and priorities and, since the term "librarian" should include professional library qualifications, school "librarian" is less acceptable to many. The school librarian is usually not a professional librarian in education, training or outlook; indeed, perhaps it was a mistake to ever use the terms school library and school librarian. The school librarian is or should be, an outstanding or master teacher with specialized advanced education in the selection, organization, management and use of learning resources and the school library a resource centre inseparable from the instructional program. For the sake of clarity and simplicity the terms "teacher-librarian" and "resource centre" are used here. Teacher-librarian clearly denotes a teaching role with a library-related specialization. A teacher-librarian is not an unqualified or "underqualified" librarian but a professional learning resources teacher who may also be a professional librarian. The term refers to a single unified teaching/ librarianship role and not to the amount of time spent in the classroom or the resource centre.

Teacher-librarians are increasingly involved in curriculum development and in co-operative teaching situations where each teacher - classroom and resource

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centre - prepares for instructional responsibilities based on areas of expertise. Teachers accept teacher-librarians as equal partners in the school when they witness competence in the planning and implementation of curricula. With increased attention to the needs of individual students communication must be particularly effective between the classroom teacher and the teacher-librarian; the same professional language and education as well as the same core of experience - classroom teaching - go a long way toward reaching this goal.

In the development of any specific unit of study in a school certain factors predominate. Societal needs and influences determine the direction mandated by a provincial government, the curriculum followed by a local board of education and the program implemented by a school within its community. The curriculum designer brings to the task a theoretical knowledge of teaching and learning supplemented by subject content, tested with practical classroom experience. The foundations of society and of education in conjunction with the implications of individual differences, group relations, growth, motivation, teaching methods, learning processes and evaluation are examined and considered. Although it is far too narrow to categorize youngsters by specific characteristics at definite ages it is recognized that mental and physical development generally proceeds on a continuum. The characteristics of varying levels of this development can be identified and do have significant implications for appropriate teaching methods and the resulting use of the resource centre.

In order for learning resources to have validity in the instructional program, their use must be carefully planned through integration with this curriculum. As a specialist in the selection, organization, management and, most important, the utilization of all manner of book and nonbook media, the teacher-librarian is most concerned with the quality of use of reference and research tools and learning materials. The subject specialist has an intimate knowledge of an academic discipline or content whereas the teacher-librarian's "subject" is learning itself. There is no teaching content to a library or resource centre, only the process of unlocking knowledge and critical thinking, the process of learning. As a learning resources teacher, the teacher-librarian is concerned with those skills which are necessary to the development of motivated independent learners who can locate, analyze and evaluate information in all media formats.

The following psychological principles (19: 311-312) have been identified by the National (U.S.) Council for the Social Studies as essential for undergirding a developmental skills program:

1. The skill should be taught functionally, in the context of a topic of study, rather than as a separate exercise
2. The learner must understand the meaning and purpose of the skill, and have motivation for developing it
3. The learner must be carefully supervised in his first attempts to apply the skill, so that

he will form correct habits from the beginning

4. The learner needs repeated opportunities to practise the skill, with immediate evaluation so that he knows where he has succeeded or failed in his performance
5. The learner needs individual help, through diagnostic measures and follow-up exercises, since not all members of any group learn at exactly the same rate or retain equal amounts of what they have learned
6. Skill instruction should be presented at increasing levels of difficulty, moving from the simple to the more complex; the resulting growth in skills should be cumulative as the learner moves through school, with each level of instruction building on and reinforcing what has been taught before
7. Students should be helped, at each stage, to generalize the skills, by applying them in many and varied situations; in this way, maximum transfer or learning can be achieved
8. The program of instruction should be sufficiently flexible to allow skills to be taught as they are needed by the learner; many skills should be developed concurrently.

In planning for the implementation of a program based on these principles the teacher-librarian joins with the classroom teacher to form a horizontal team of two equals working toward established objectives. This dyad co-operatively plans what is to be done and the most effective way to accomplish the task. The classroom teacher and the teacher-librarian each bring different backgrounds and strengths in teaching but they do understand the potential of various approaches to learning and recognize common goals. Through planning with other teachers the teacher-librarian is also a source of ideas for program development.

If the use of learning resources is intended, the teacher-librarian is involved in preplanning before a unit of study begins. In this way the teacher can at least ensure that appropriate materials are available. Since the teacher-librarian will be working with a class, group or individuals it is important to know what the preliminary objectives of the teacher are. The teacher decides on a unit of work and outlines its scope. General teaching strategies which may be conducive to resource centre use are considered. The teacher meets with the teacher-librarian to select and plan the use of materials and services. The teacher and teacher-librarian determine the sequence of content on the basis of the availability of materials and necessary personnel.

The dyad or teaching team redefines objectives and determines the skills to be stressed in relationship to local curricula, student needs and available learning resources. These may be subject skills, study and critical thinking skills, reference and research skills or listening and viewing skills. The teacher and

teacher-librarian then set up a series of learning experiences involving individual students, small and large groups or whole classes. Selected materials may be kept in the resource centre or moved elsewhere, whichever is most appropriate. At this point the unit is introduced by a team member. The students work on the unit in the resource centre and the classroom with the classroom teacher and teacher-librarian stressing skills related especially to the program unit. The teacher-librarian may teach a short integrated skill lesson, develop a series of related lessons, offer an enrichment lesson or give a book talk on the theme.

When planning with one teacher, a group or committee of teachers, or a teaching team, the teacher-librarian *co-operatively* (10:41):

- determines the contribution that the resource centre is to make to the overall teaching plan

- determines specific teaching objectives to be accomplished through the use of learning resources and guidance

- identifies basic concepts and skills to be introduced, reinforced, or extended

- structures learning guides; reading, viewing, listening checklists; summary forms; reaction charts; critical evaluation cards

- determines appropriateness of proposed assignments and the availability of suitable materials

- sets target dates for each phase of the resource centre role in the program

- designs specific teaching strategies requiring resource centre support

- designs specific learning experiences and activities requiring learning resources

- designs specific unit and support activities

- designs strategies for meeting student needs, interests, goals, abilities, progress rate, concerns, and potential

- identifies specific media uniquely appropriate for each of the teaching and learning designs

- programs for the most logical use of media in progressive, sequential order

- designs appropriate culminating teaching and learning activities

- designs appropriate evaluating activities to determine the effectiveness of the resource centre role.

In this co-operative teaching situation the teacher-librarian may work with a group of students over an extended period of time while the classroom teacher works with another group in the classroom. The contribution of the teacher-librarian extends to the specific needs of the student. This means that the teacher-librarian may be offering remedial teaching, leading novel study, managing behavior or teaching in other ways suitable to the particular level, subject, unit

and objectives related to resource centre use as determined co-operatively by the team. Throughout the project, the teacher and teacher-librarian evaluate the growth made by students in planned skills, the effectiveness of the materials as well as the effectiveness of the unit itself.

With the movement from an insular school library to an integrated resource centre the skills for using libraries efficiently have been better integrated with the curriculum. Scheduled library science classes are inappropriate and no longer offered where effective programs predominate. These classes were not based on the principles of learning and psychology outlined. They were taught out of context, were not seen as relevant by the learner, were not necessarily given when needed and were generally ineffective. Scheduled classes on a regular timetable persist only where the principal has little notion of the educational foundation of the resource centre, where the classes provide spare periods for teachers - an expensive and dubious practice - or where the teacher-librarian is not prepared to become actively involved in program development and curriculum implementation.

Although any professional librarian, given a knowledge of curriculum content, can obviously select materials to support units of study from appropriate reviewing tools, the criteria for previewing and reviewing learning resources involve additional factors often not included in selection for a general or public library audience. The teacher-librarian needs to know not only the community and users, the nature of the existing collection, general and specific criteria for different types of subject material and sources of bibliographic and review information but also needs to have a professional knowledge of other teachers, of instructional strategies used for specific units of study, of the instructional design of products examined, of the intended audience in grade and ability levels of curriculum relationships and of the principal and potential uses of the material. Learning resources must have a planned purpose or at least the possibility of such and this means a more complete integration with teaching learning processes.

The balanced collection found in many public libraries is a mistake in the school resource centre. To select material on all topics, a financial impossibility at best, is to neglect the context of the service. If one country is studied using Socratic approaches and the textbook and another is studied using inquiry approaches and learning resources then little should be purchased on the former since the teaching method does not necessitate material and a great deal more purchased on the latter since the strategy here means that support will be necessary for a specific number, usually at least class size, of users. Similarly, when organizing resource centre information the nature of the users and elements of the school curricula are taken into account. The subjectivity of the selection and organization of materials can become more precisely defined in the school setting.

With increasing demands on learning resources

coupled with decreasing tax dollars there should be improved co-operation among schools and among schools and other libraries. Such co-operation is based on a clear understanding of the role of each agency and a commitment to sharing materials and services where mutually beneficial. Each agency serves a quite different purpose with specific criteria for attempts at combining services (16). Librarians must recognize the unique expertise of the teacher-librarian and be knowledgeable about the role of the resource centre. The development of the resource centre as an integrated learning centre to provide the skills for self-realization means that public library use will increase tremendously; if the public library is relatively untapped by students as a community resource, this can be overcome through co-operation. The school must also be aware of the services of the public library and actively promote its use with both staff and students.

Should suitable material not be available in the resource centre, not available on loan from another school or agency, and not available from commercial sources the teacher-librarian has the ability as a media specialist to determine the instructional need and design a product based on theories of learning and educational technology. The appropriate medium is matched to the instructional purpose and message to be conveyed. The teacher-librarian then produces or supervises the local production of needed learning resources. Too often the production of materials is seen as a purely technical matter but in the resource centre the instructional design function is an important factor in the development of media. The unique characteristics of a filmstrip, for example, with its fixed sequence and visual qualities might be much more justifiable for the intended purpose and audience than a sound recording which can require a higher level of motivation and improved listening skills.

Reading continues to be of prime importance to the teacher-librarian and numerous methods of motivating voluntary reading are common in resource centres. In conjunction with fellow teachers the teacher-librarian works toward broadening horizons, increasing language proficiency and resolving student problems through story telling and book talks as well as improved reading guidance (which can approach bibliotherapy); creative dramatics, puppetry and related programs.

Information services are offered to students and teachers with the reference interview becoming a professional teaching situation in many cases. Since the teacher-librarian is familiar with individual units through advance planning the student may receive precise information immediately or have skills introduced or reinforced depending on defined individual objectives. Teachers gain the ability to ask questions at a variety of levels, from the recall of information to the evaluation of abstract concepts, through professional education and classroom experience. These techniques are necessary in the resource centre to gauge the precise information needs of the student and the level of specific skill attainment at that

time. Reference and research skills are taught as an integrated part of the instructional program in each subject on a continuing sequential basis. Where desirable and valid, however, some skills may also be reinforced and extended as a short unit themselves. For example, a co-operative unit may be planned for a senior commercial class where the student will need to know a variety of specific skills such as how to use a dictionary as an aid in typing, how to locate quotations for speeches, the correct form of address to be used in given circumstances and how to file information for easy retrieval in order to function effectively and efficiently in a business office. Evaluation of learning always takes place in the context of classroom teaching and its extensions.

The teacher-librarian is also actively engaged in teaching students the effective use of nonbook media and equipment; this includes the skills necessary to report research in many and varied ways other than the traditional essay format. The student of today must be knowledgeable about the electronic environment outside the school. We know that by the time a student completes secondary school more time has been spent watching television than has been spent in school - it would be gross negligence to overlook the skills necessary to evaluate this and other nonbook sources of information or to relegate these learning skills to a single separate course in screen education. Graphic analysis and visual and aural literacy are necessary components of a student's education; as a media specialist, the teacher-librarian works with other teachers to integrate these learning skills with appropriate areas of the curriculum.

Two of the most important areas of competence in school librarianship are professional development services to teachers and strategies for change, both of which necessitate teacher education for maximum effect. Educational information services for staff members are necessary and useful if the teacher-librarian considers the specific interest, time and energy of the user. An even more fundamental professional development service is in-service education. As a curriculum developer and educational leader the teacher-librarian has a professional obligation and responsibility to lead seminars and workshops on the effective use of the resource centre. Topics range from the operation of audio-visual equipment to the implementation of effective teaching strategies. In-service education is carefully planned and pursued. It demands a critical analysis of need based on relevant educational principles, a real reason for teachers to attend, effective teaching by the teacher-librarian and involvement by participants. Evaluation of the session itself and how well it met the need originally identified provides guidance for future workshops. Only through increased knowledge of resource centre services as necessary components of teaching methodology will the potential of teacher-librarians and resource centres be realized.

A parallel consideration is the area of strategies for change of which in-service education programs are one part. Through perspective as a teacher plus an intimate

knowledge and understanding of the institutional framework within which the resource centre operates, the teacher-librarian can identify areas of potential support and hindrance more easily. By exploiting political realities and building on aspirations of administrators and the goals of teachers the teacher-librarian can not only integrate services better but also develop a well-supported program.

The debate over faculty status for community college and university librarians has raged for years but is not a concern in schools. The teacher-librarian has full faculty status and is recognized as an equal partner in education in terms of salary, working conditions and vacation leave. This status was gained by the most obvious means possible - the same basic qualification to be in the school in the first place followed by a similar role through specialization within the field. Indeed, most school districts have defined the role and expectations of the teacher-librarian as a master teacher and have granted additional responsibility allowances for department headships and educational leadership.

Collegiality is a characteristic of the teaching profession that cannot be ignored; just as the professional with a Master of Arts or Master of Science degree has a teaching certificate so too does the professional with a Master of Library Science degree. Professional roles in a school, other than peripheral or support positions, begin with teacher education and classroom experience followed by additional qualifications for specialization. Whether one agrees or not, it is a fact of life in a school that teachers do not extend their privileges, rights and status to non-certificated personnel, regardless of position or qualification. Familiarity with curriculum design and particularly successful experience in the classroom provide a respectability that cannot be achieved by academic qualifications alone.

Comparison of libraries is often done by examining quantitative data but in a school the number of personnel, book and nonbook materials, equipment and square feet per student are relatively meaningless for determining the level of development and value of resource centre services. Numbers are significant only when establishing new resource centres to equalize tangible products and potential. Much more useful but more difficult to measure are qualitative considerations. The resource centre can be distinguished from a library by its specialized curriculum implementation (program development and co-operative teaching) services; the teacher-librarian and resource centre represent a variety of teaching strategies found to be educationally effective. The school which practises inquiry-centred approaches to learning requires much more personnel, resources and space for the same number of students than a school which stresses textbook-oriented Socratic methods. The resource centre must be essential to the instructional process if it is to have significance or even to survive. With budgetary restraints the resource centre is using money that could mean smaller classes, more counselors or more remedial assistance. Unlike an integrated

resource centre, a children's or young adult library added to the school could not and would not outlast financial cutbacks and the setting of priorities. Perhaps a more reasonable method of informal evaluation would be to close the resource centre for a month to see if teaching and learning continue as before. If a teacher can teach and if the student can learn without the resource centre and the teacher-librarian, the service as it exists in that situation is merely a beauty spot on the body politic, an expensive and doomed educational frill. The following problems (adapted from 11: 46-47) have traditionally prevented the full implementation of a planned program for facilitating independent learning using the resource centre:

1. lack of a school district K through 12 developmental study skills program that mandates the integration of independent learning skills with all aspects of the program
2. limitation of instruction in the use of the resource centre to a brief orientation session
3. failure to include in provincially or locally developed courses of study, specific learning experiences requiring resource centre support and specific reference to the necessity of integrating instruction in the use of the resource centre within the framework of the teaching-learning program
4. isolation of the teacher-librarian from curriculum study and revision activities
5. failure of teacher education institutions to include in basic programs an adequate understanding of the function of the resource centre as a learning laboratory and the role of the teacher-librarian as a fellow teacher
6. failure of the teacher to expand class knowledge beyond textbook content and classroom confines
7. reluctance of the teacher to preplan with the teacher-librarian for the class or group to use resource centre media, facilities, and services before a unit is introduced to the class (or, unfortunately, the reluctance of the teacher-librarian)
8. lack of sufficient staff - both professional and para-professional - to support adequately a comprehensive, diversified instructional program in the use of the resource centre.
9. lack of administrative support for the development of teaching methods which effectively utilize resource centre personnel and services

The resource centre will never be really necessary until students are unable to do satisfactory work without access to the professional teaching and library media services which it provides.

Although it is possible to define the role of the

Footnotes

¹Eleanor Frances Brown, *Bibliotherapy and Its Widening Applications*, (Metuchen, J.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975), p. 2

²Ruth M. Tews, ed., *Bibliotherapy*, issued as *Library Trends*, VII, no. 2, Oct., 1962.

³Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries, Committee on Bibliotherapy, *Bibliotherapy: Methods and Materials* (prepared by) Committee on Bibliotherapy (Mildred T. Moody, chairman); and Subcommittee on the Troubled Child, (Hilda K. Limper, chairman) (Chicago, A.L.A., 1971) p. 7.

Areas where research in bibliotherapy is needed are:

¹effects of specific books on certain people

²relation between individual reading background and personality adjustments

³methods of measuring behavioral changes effected by bibliotherapy.¹¹

⁴Joseph S. Zaccaria and Harold A. Moses, *Facilitating Human Development through Reading - the Use of Bibliotherapy in Teaching and Counseling* (Champaign, Ill.: Stipes Publishing Co., 1968), p. 41.

⁵Eleanor Frances Brown, *Bibliotherapy and Its Widening Applications* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975), p. 183-185.

⁶Henry D. Olsen, "Bibliotherapy to Help Children Solve Problems", *Elementary School Journal* 75 (April, 1975): 422-9.

⁷J. F. Malkiewicz, "Stories Can Be Springboards", *Instructor* 79 (April, 1970): 133-4

⁸ERIC Research in Education, August 1974-ED074460. (abstract)

⁹Reginald W. Higgs, "The Role of Bibliotherapy in Reading Instruction", *Exceptional Children* 41 (April, 1975).

¹⁰Emrich, L., "Bibliotherapy for Stutterers", *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 52, (1966): 74-79.

¹¹H. Altmann and B. Nielsen, "Books and Empathy Help Troubled Children", *Canadian Library Journal* 31 (August, 1974): 284-7

¹²B. S. Edwards, "Therapeutic Value of Reading" *Elementary English* 49 (February, 1972): 213-18.

¹³David H. Russell and Caroline Shrodes, "Contributions of Research in Bibliotherapy to the Language Arts Program", pp. 335-342, in B. S. Edwards "Therapeutic Value of Reading", *Elementary English* 49 (February, 1972): p. 215.

¹⁴Thomas Ves, "The Power of the Book", pp. 21-24 cited by B. S. Edwards, "Therapeutic Value of Reading", *Elementary English* 49 (February, 1972): p. 216.

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teacher-librarian as a teacher and as a librarian it is most unwise to do so. Indeed, this is a common mistake made by educators of teacher-librarians. There are essential competencies necessary from teacher education, classroom experience, library and media education but it is the fusion of these that leads to excellence, not dual qualifications in themselves. Until programs which educate teacher-librarians, whether faculties of Education or Library Science, recognize, require and develop these areas of competence, there will continue to be a chronic shortage of teacher-librarians who understand this specialized teaching role and have the necessary skills to implement it. The time is long overdue for instructors in school librarianship to examine the basic research (1, 2, 3) and get on with the job of developing the necessary course components. A specialized Master of Education degree in school librarianship would provide sufficient scope at the appropriate level to build on a teacher's background and experience. It would also provide a suitable framework for the components which are too often missing: instructional design, program planning, co-operative teaching, human relations, selection of learning resources in all formats,

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kindness and consideration. In short, they are neither angels nor devils, but interesting young people growing to maturity. They make mistakes; they suffer for them, but they do not possess that overburdening sense of guilt which has bothered some of the older generation.

Are our young people in Lon-

don, Ontario, like this? I believe that a good proportion of the students we teach are undergoing the same kind of conflicts Blume describes so aptly in her novel. Our own standards, changing moral codes, generation gap etc. can prevent us sometimes from acknowledging the truth. Openness and a refreshing lack of hypocrisy are two characteristics I see in the young people about me, and if one takes time to really listen to what they have to say, one is rewarded by their acceptance. That they have a life of their own as sometimes ignored or unacknowledged by the adult world - a fact which certainly partly contributes to the generation gap problem.

Forever . . . is going into the school library at Laurier with my usual enclosure, "Recommended for Senior Reading": I feel that it is worth defending on the grounds that is a realistic portrayal of a lifestyle more common to young adults than many of us care to admit. I believe seniors will find the story interesting, the characters sympathetic, and the theme valid. The book may assist them in sorting out their own emotions, and in understanding parental positions. Although the value system in the novel is not mine, I am willing to acknowledge that it exists. The subject matter is not sordid, just honest. This is not an example of great literature, but it can contribute to the understanding of ourselves and our emotions, if we let it. So many high school students leave us without ever analysing their own value systems or ever having put them to the test in a discussion with adults or their own peer group. *Forever . . .* deals with a reality many young people understand - they enjoyed discussing it intelligently with me and I enjoyed listening.

Thus, endeth the tale of one who, struggled not in vain, because the battle was worth it. Judy Blume puts it this way: "I just think kids have certain rights, and they've been denied those rights for a long time."³

³Elaine Simpson, "Reason, not Emotion," in *Top of the News*, (April 1975), 304

²Judy Blume, in Justin Wintle's *The Pied Piper*, Paddington Press, 1974, 314.

³Ibid., 315

A Judy Blume Bibliography

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the institutional setting, design and production of media, developmental reading. For too long we have paid lip service to a specialized teaching role and translated it into courses in administration, cataloguing and literature.

The school must examine its own program in order to determine the type of service that it requires from the resource centre. If the only concern is the circulation of materials, then parent volunteers or a clerical assistant may be sufficient. If selection and organization warrant increased attention as well as children's and young adult services and programs then a library technician or librarian should be employed depending on the scope and quality of service preferred. If the utilization of learning resources through valid, planned experiences leading to independent learning is of prime importance then a master teacher with advanced education and training in school librarianship is required.

Teacher-librarians have progressed from the days when it was all too common for refugees from the classroom to be placed in charge of school libraries to a time now when outstanding specialist teachers head vital resource centres. School

libraries have moved from their position outside the mainstream of education to resource centres at the physical and philosophical heart of the school. This development is a direct result of changes in education and, more specifically, changes in teaching strategies. Instruction in learning skills is integrated with all aspects of the curriculum and taught together by the classroom teacher and the teacher-librarian. The direction and learning focuses increasingly on learning how to learn so that students will have the necessary motivation and the skills to examine their own environment, evaluate it and perhaps even reform it.

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