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Teacher librarians & literacy coaches: Their roles in reading support

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Teacher librarians & literacy coaches: Their roles in reading support

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Abstract

According to AASL (2010), multiple research studies have confirmed that there is a correlation between school library programs staffed by certified school librarians and increased student achievement; yet, many schools are also beginning to employ literacy coaches to improve reading achievement. With the teacher librarian being a well-established part of the school system, and playing a vital role in supporting students' reading achievement, a clear definition of roles is needed. The purpose of this case study was to analyze roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches and to determine how schools can utilize one or both of these positions to maximize effective teaching and learning of reading. To this end, semi-structured interviews with teacher librarians and a literacy coach working within the same school district were conducted. Responses were coded for themes using a constant comparative method. An initial list of coding categories was drawn from key professional organization's position statements, and then modified as new categories emerged. The researcher compared themes that emerged in the teacher librarian's role with those that emerged in the literacy coach's role to determine how each professional supports students and teachers in the area of reading, and where collaboration takes place. Results show that both teacher librarian and literacy coaches support students and teachers in the area of reading; however, a greater efficiency and efficacy in collaboration is needed to maximize instruction and benefit teaching and learning.

TEACHER LIBRARIANS & LITERACY COACHES:
THEIR ROLES IN READING SUPPORT

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Division of School Library Studies
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
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by
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This Research Paper by: Nicole N. Ruthaivilavan

Titled: Teacher Librarians & Literacy Coaches: Their Roles in Reading Support

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

According to AASL (2010), multiple research studies have confirmed that there is a correlation between school library programs staffed by certified school librarians and increased student achievement; yet, many schools are also beginning to employ literacy coaches to improve reading achievement. With the teacher librarian being a well-established part of the school system, and playing a vital role in supporting students' reading achievement, a clear definition of roles is needed. The purpose of this case study was to analyze roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches and to determine how schools can utilize one or both of these positions to maximize effective teaching and learning of reading. To this end, semi-structured interviews with teacher librarians and a literacy coach working within the same school district were conducted. Responses were coded for themes using a constant comparative method. An initial list of coding categories was drawn from key professional organization's position statements, and then modified as new categories emerged. The researcher compared themes that emerged in the teacher librarian's role with those that emerged in the literacy coach's role to determine how each professional supports students and teachers in the area of reading, and where collaboration takes place. Results show that both teacher librarian and literacy coaches support students and teachers in the area of reading; however, a greater efficiency and efficacy in collaboration is needed to maximize instruction and benefit teaching and learning.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

You're a classroom teacher who has just left a meeting where the principal displayed and discussed your school's latest Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test results. There is a concern about the students' proficiency in reading, and as a result the school has decided that there will be an intense focus on improving reading instruction this year. You start to question and self-doubt. You thought you were a good reading teacher. After all, you have an endorsement in reading, you've attended workshops and conferences, and you're an experienced teacher. What else can you do? If only there was someone who could work *with* you, to help you plan, give you some feedback, and offer support.

Problem Statement

According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2014), students are being held to higher literacy standards in order to achieve college and career readiness. Students need critical-thinking skills and the ability to closely and attentively read stories and literature, as well as more complex texts in areas such as science and social studies. The Rand Reading Study Group (2002) acknowledges that the demand for literacy skills is higher than ever; however, it also states that reading scores of high school students have remained stagnant for the past 30 years. Robertson, Dougherty, Ford-Connors, and Paratore (2014) state "both national and state data continue to show that a large portion of students at the elementary and secondary levels fall below benchmark for reading" (p. 547). This data indicates the need for schools to focus on reading, raising the bar not just for students' reading achievement but also for teachers' reading instruction.

Historically, the responsibility of teaching children to read fell on the classroom teacher alone. However, as Dees, Mayer, Morin, and Willis (2010) claim, “the ultimate goal of improving student learning and utilizing the best practices school-wide requires all stakeholders in the learning community to work together” (p. 10). Many schools have dedicated time, money, and energy to professional learning focused on instructional effectiveness of teachers, which will in turn increase academic achievement of learners.

As a result of the Reading First initiative, an increasingly popular method of improving instructional practice has been the implementation of a coaching model (Chalfant, Plasschaert, Madsen, & McCray, 2011). According to the International Reading Association (IRA, 2010), a literacy coach is a professional “whose goal is to improve reading achievement in their assigned school or district” (para. 1). The IRA states that the roles of literacy coaches generally fall into three areas: (a) providing intensive, supplemental support to students who struggle with reading; (b) providing coaching and other professional development support for teachers; and (c) developing and implementing various instructional programs within a school or district. Chalfant et al. (2011) also note common characteristics of successful literacy coaches, including their ability to facilitate collaboration among colleagues and develop relationships with teachers.

Many states are now issuing credentials to certify qualifying teachers as literacy coaches. For example, University of Northern Iowa (UNI) recently established a comprehensive literacy program, which trains qualified teachers to become certified literacy coaches. With their most recent graduating class, the number of certified literacy coaches in Iowa at the time of this writing is now 67.

However, literacy coaching isn't the only source of literacy support in Iowa schools. In 2006, the state of Iowa reinstated the requirement that each school district in Iowa employ a qualified teacher librarian. The American Association of School Libraries (AASL, 2010) position statement on the school librarian's role in reading reminds us "school librarians are in a critical and unique position to partner with other educators to elevate the reading development of our nation's youth" (para. 2) and that "school library programs serve as the hub of literacy learning" (para. 5) in schools. Additionally, Dees et al. (2010) assert that librarians and classroom teachers are instructional partners, who learn from one another to improve instructional strategies.

School librarians perform myriad roles as literacy specialists. According to AASL (2010), these roles include but are not limited to modeling and collaboratively teaching reading comprehension strategies, co-planning and co-teaching interdisciplinary lessons, developing and promoting the library collection, providing professional development around reading instruction and promotion, and partnering with classroom teachers and reading specialists to make decisions about reading initiatives and reading comprehension instruction.

There appear to be a number of similarities in the roles of teacher librarians and literacy coaches. Stakeholders may wonder which will best meet the needs of their school. It is worth exploring how school librarians and literacy coaches are being and can be utilized to improve instructional practice in the area of reading. Research is also necessary to determine if these roles are mutually exclusive, or if these professionals could work together for an even greater impact. This study may help schools determine

staffing needs to support professional learning for teachers and student reading achievement.

Summary of Problem Statement

According to AASL (2010), multiple research studies have confirmed that there is a correlation between school library programs staffed by certified school librarians and increased student achievement; yet, many schools are also beginning to employ literacy coaches to improve reading achievement. With the teacher librarian being a well-established part of the school system, and playing a vital role in supporting students' reading achievement, a clear definition of roles is needed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis is to analyze and define roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches as outlined by professional organizations and literature, and to determine how schools can utilize one or both of these positions to maximize effective teaching and learning.

Research Questions

1. How do teacher librarians support classroom teachers in the area of reading?
2. How do teacher librarians support students in the area of reading?
3. How do literacy coaches support classroom teachers in the area of reading?
4. How do literacy coaches support students in the area of reading?
5. How can teacher librarians and literacy coaches collaborate to maximize effective teaching and learning?

Assumptions

To be available to collaborate and support teachers and students inside and outside of the library, it is assumed teacher librarians are full time in one building and are operating on a flexible schedule.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to analyze roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches and to determine how schools can utilize one or both of these positions to maximize effective teaching and learning of reading.

Previous research shows what the perceived roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches are, how teacher librarians and literacy coaches impact student learning, and how teacher librarians and literacy coaches collaborate with classroom teachers.

Perceptions of Instructional Roles

It is important to understand what others perceive to be the instructional role of teacher librarians. Church (2008) found that lack of principal knowledge regarding the roles of teacher librarians deterred the library program from contributing to student learning to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, she set out to understand what principals in Virginia perceived the role of a school librarian to be. Elementary principals throughout the state of Virginia were surveyed and asked to rate statements using a five-point Likert scale. The survey concluded with an open-ended question. The results indicated that the majority of principals agree or strongly agree that teacher librarians should teach students to use information sources, both digital and print, and that they should teach students how to locate and evaluate information within those sources. Most principals also agreed that teacher librarians should provide professional development for staff, and should collaborate with staff to plan and teach lessons that integrate information literacy.

Likewise, Hughes-Hassell, Brasfield, and Dupree (2012) recognized the potential for teacher librarians to be involved members and contributors in their professional learning communities (PLC). They set out to determine the current role of teacher librarians in PLCs. Subscribers to AASL Forum and LM_NET were invited to participate in an online survey about their participation in PLCs. Respondents represented a large range of school size and student demographics. Participants were asked to indicate in what type of PLC they were involved, and also what tasks they performed in that PLC. The majority of librarians surveyed were involved in core subject PLCs, with a smaller population participating in leadership, specialist, technology, and literacy PLCs. The most frequently performed tasks within those groups were affiliated with the role of information specialist. Other tasks fell into the roles of leader, critical friend, collaborator and teaching partner, and staff developer. The results indicate that teacher librarians are performing a variety of roles within their professional learning communities. Actively engaging in these PLCs allows librarians to be a part of “collaborative planning and teaching, promote inquiry, participate in reflective practice, and become effective change agents – all roles encouraged by the AASL national guidelines” (p. 37).

Like teacher librarians, literacy coaches are often engaged in many roles. Walpole and Blamey (2008) met “many coaches struggling to define their roles and organize their time” (p. 222). They gathered reflections from principals and coaches in hopes of providing some guidance on how to balance the various roles of literacy coaches. Their two-year multiple-case study included 31 participants – 14 principals and 17 literacy coaches – working in 20 schools across Georgia. Data was gathered through interviews and was analyzed by grounded theory with constant comparative coding procedures. The

researchers found that principals and coaches identified two broad roles: mentor and director. As mentors, literacy coaches provided teaching, modeling, observation, and feedback. As directors, literacy coaches guided the literacy program of the school, using data and assessment to determine needs of teachers and the school as a whole, and aligning school-wide efforts with district and state mandates. They also managed curriculum materials. Using this data, Walpole and Blamey advise that a principal and coach should work together to determine the needs of their teachers and students, specify a coaching role that is appropriate, and identify specific activities that will allow the coach to fulfill that role.

Mraz, Algozzine, and Watson (2008) saw that as literacy coaching took hold in more and more schools, the “titles, roles, and responsibilities associated with literacy coaching have changed and variations in the expectations and actual behavior surrounding the position abound” (p. 141). Therefore, they sought the perspectives of principals, teachers, and literacy coaches on the way literacy coaching is and should be used in elementary schools. Six principals, 85 classroom teachers, and eight literacy coaches from six metropolitan elementary schools participated. Subjects completed a survey using a Likert scale, indicating the extent to which behaviors were currently a part of the literacy coach’s role, and the extent to which they believed a behavior should be a part of the literacy coach’s role. All participants agreed that literacy coaches do and should continue to coordinate the school’s reading program. However, principals saw the literacy coach as more of a curriculum coordinator, ensuring that the school’s reading program is meeting district and state mandates, while teachers would prefer literacy coaches be more actively involved in the development of effective literacy practices in

classrooms. There was agreement among participants about the importance of literacy coaches serving as resource to classroom teachers: modeling, observing, mentoring, gathering materials for lessons, and defining and addressing staff development needs. An area of difference was that of literacy coaches as instructors to students. Teachers would prefer that coaches work directly with students, while principals believe coaches should work with teachers to improve instruction. While the survey results showed a general agreement about the roles, the interview questions indicated, “coaches, classroom teachers, and principals tend to have varying perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach” (p.150). It was suggested that the job description and schedule of literacy coaches be visible, and that they are given ample opportunity to apply and hone their specialized training.

Teacher librarians and literacy coaches both take on various instructional roles. It is important for these roles to be clear, visible, and understood by all stakeholders, as classroom teachers look to their colleagues for professional guidance and support.

Impact on Reading Achievement

Research has shown that support from literacy coaches or a teacher librarian has a positive impact on student reading achievement. In one such research study, Biancarosa, Bryk, and Dexter (2010) set out to examine the effects of literacy coaching in the learning of kindergarten through second grade students. Through an accelerated multi-cohort, longitudinal, quasi-experimental study, data were collected from 8,576 students in kindergarten through second grade over a period of four years. During the first year of the study, a group of teachers selected to become literacy coaches attended an intensive, graduate-level training program. This first year was a no-treatment period, used to gather

baseline data on reading student achievement. During each of the subsequent three years, literacy coaches worked one-on-one with teachers in their classrooms, providing observation, modeling, and continuous professional development. Students were assessed twice annually using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Terra Nova. The results indicate a significant gain in student literacy learning, with gains increasing each year of the study. The researchers believe the intense, year-long training of literacy coaches contributed to the success of the coaching model.

Similarly, Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2011) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between literacy coaching and reading achievement, with particular focus on whether specific literacy coaching activities and specific content of literacy coaching predict student reading gains. The study was conducted in a large urban district that was in the first year of its Reading First grant. Researchers analyzed structured coaching logs, which literacy coaches submitted weekly for five months. These logs were used to determine how literacy coaches spent their time, and establish correlations between coaching activities and content and student reading gains. Pre – and post-test scores for DIBELS served as the assessment data for the K-3 students participating in the study. The researchers found that students in classrooms who received literacy instruction support from literacy coaches made significant gains in reading performance. Specifically, conferencing with teachers, modeling lessons, and observing classroom teachers were predictors of student gain on the DIBELS assessment.

Support from teacher librarians also impacts student learning, as Beard and Antrim (2010) reported. They identified the need for students to have access to and choose appropriate books for independent reading time, and hypothesized that those students

who receive help from a teacher librarian when selecting books would increase their overall reading achievement. Their longitudinal study tracked 19 below-level fifth graders across two semesters. During the first semester, students received no support when selecting books. In the second semester, a teacher librarian intervened. The researchers tested students at the beginning of the first semester, using data from both the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Only students who scored below grade-level on at least one of these assessments were included in the study. The participants were tested again mid-year and at the end of the school year to track progress. The results showed a substantial increase in Lexile level, reading engagement, and reading comprehension during the semester with intervention. There were incidental benefits, as well. A teacher librarian's survey revealed that students enjoyed reading more during the second semester, and the number of books read by the cohort during the second semester increased by nearly 70 percent.

Lance and Hofschire (2012) built on research that school library programs impact student achievement, and explored the direct impact of the teacher librarian. For their study, they analyzed staffing data and Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) reading scores in 2005 and 2011. Staffing data was obtained from the Colorado Department of Education. The study focused on the highest (advanced) CSAP scores and lowest (unsatisfactory) CSAP scores. These scores were compared with teacher librarian staffing information. The results showed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between advanced reading levels and an endorsed teacher librarian. Schools that lost their teacher librarian after 2005, or never had one, had fewer students score in the advanced range, and had less gain – or even loss – since 2005.

Notably, schools with the largest percentage of higher advanced reading scores in 2011 and higher increases in advanced reading scores between 2005 and 2011 were those that gained an endorsed librarian during that interval. Having an endorsed teacher librarian versus a non-endorsed librarian or library assistant also made a difference. Scores from 2011 showed that schools with at least one full-time endorsed librarian averaged higher advanced CSAP reading scores and lower unsatisfactory scores than schools with less than one full-time endorsed librarian. This study “updates, confirms, and extends the findings of the growing body of research about the impact of school libraries on student achievement” (p. 18).

Collaboration

Lance, Rodney, and Schwarz (2010) observed that collaboration made a big difference in state reading and language arts scores; however, they also noticed it happened too infrequently. They surveyed 176 administrators, 668 classroom teachers, and 146 teacher librarians in Idaho to determine value and frequency of classroom teacher and teacher librarian collaboration. The majority of administrators identified collaboration as essential or desirable; however, classroom teachers and teacher librarians report that collaboration does not always happen on a regular basis. Of the classroom teachers surveyed, almost half reported that neither they nor their teacher librarians initiated collaboration. About a third of teacher librarians reported that collaboration happened rarely or never, regardless of who initiated the collaboration. A quarter of teacher librarians reported that they initiated collaboration at least monthly, and one-tenth reported that they initiated collaboration weekly. Where teacher-initiated collaboration happened at least monthly, reading and language arts scores were three to seven percent

higher than schools where librarians reported less frequent teacher-initiated collaboration. The researchers found that despite a high level of support for collaboration from administrators, it still happens too rarely. They recommend that administrators, classroom teachers, and teacher librarians take initiative to establish and strengthen their collaborative efforts, as it benefits students.

Likewise, Kimmel (2012) recognized the value of collaboration in teacher librarianship. She noted the extensive research that has been conducted investigating collaboration, as well as the many times the word is mentioned in *Information Power* and *Empowering Learners*; however, she felt few researchers had addressed collaborative planning as a site for professional development. In her year-long study, she recorded, transcribed, and analyzed eight planning sessions between the teacher librarian and a second grade teaching team. She also conducted interviews with the classroom teachers to determine the purpose of planning with teacher librarians. After analyzing the data, two major themes surfaced in regards to what a teacher librarian brings to planning: knowledge and support. Teachers appreciated the librarian's knowledge of curriculum, technology, resources, and what was happening in other grade levels. They also valued the librarian's support in pulling materials, offering suggestions and ideas, and creating units. The researcher found that teachers value the involvement of a teacher librarian during planning. A proposed extension of this research was to follow collaborative planning into the classroom to see the influence of the teacher librarian in classroom instruction, not just in library instruction.

Literacy coaches also work closely with classroom teachers. Some research has been conducted showing how literacy coaches spend their time and identifying their

impact on student achievement; however, Vanderberg and Stephens (2010) sought to learn more about the actions that literacy coaches carry out that teachers consider helpful and what specific coach-initiated changes teachers made in their reading and writing beliefs and practices. Data was taken from 35 teacher interviews from the researchers' 2007 study of the South Carolina Reading Initiative (SCRI) in order to understand the ways in which teachers considered the coaches to be helpful and detail the specific changes teachers attributed to their coaches. One of the literacy coach's roles in SCRI was to lead a study group. Three-fourths of participants found that the coach-led study group meetings created a more collaborative community among teachers. More than two-thirds of participants commented on the support that literacy coaches provided, such as encouraging participants to take risks, facilitating new teaching strategies, and demonstrating lessons and strategies in participants' classrooms. The participants also noted the research-based strategies learned from the literacy coaches, and made a direct link from this knowledge to a change in beliefs and practice. While this study described the ways literacy coaches provided time and resources for teachers to collaborate with each other, and support that literacy coaches provided, it did not address in great detail the ways in which literacy coaches directly collaborate with classroom teachers. This is an area that the current study hopes to explore further.

Summary

As literacy experts in their respective buildings, teacher librarians and literacy coaches perform a variety of roles from working and planning closely with teachers to providing professional development. When effective collaboration takes place, the presence of these qualified professionals in a building can positively impact student

reading achievement. Research shows that administrators and classroom teachers value teacher librarians and literacy coaches; however, a lack of clarity about their roles sometimes hinders potential opportunities to improve teaching and learning. As the IRA (2010) recognizes, “responsibilities and titles often differ based on the context in which they work, and teaching and educational experience” (para. 1). This study aims to define the roles and responsibilities of both professionals in regards to supporting teachers and students in the area of reading.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Reading is a foundational skill with a high priority in schools. As such, many schools employ a teacher librarian, literacy coach, or both to support students and teachers in the area of literacy. A clear definition of roles is needed for teachers and administrators to understand how teacher librarians and literacy coaches support teachers and students in the area of reading. Furthermore, if both professionals are employed in one building, an exploration of how they are collaborating and maximizing effective teaching and learning needs to be done.

Research Design

A case study methodology was used for this research. According to Choemprayong and Wildemuth (2009), case studies should be used to study contemporary phenomenon in a natural setting, and aim to answer to how and why questions. Typically qualitative, case studies “generate rich data concerning a particular case” (Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 54). This richness of data is both the case study’s biggest strength and its biggest weakness, as critics cite the lack of generalizability as a limitation.

Data Sources

Data was collected from a large school district in the Midwest. The researcher chose teacher librarians and literacy coaches who work full time in the same building, and have been in their roles for at least two years. Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted via Zoom. It is recognized that all roles of teacher librarians and literacy coaches are important; however, the focus of this study is the support provided to

teachers and students in the area of reading. Therefore, participants were asked only about their interactions with teachers and students related to reading.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. As Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) state, this type of analysis “consists of purposively selected texts, which can inform the research questions being investigated” (p. 309). In this case study, the semi-structured interviews were coded using themes as the unit of analysis. An initial list of coding categories was used from position statements (see Appendix B), and then was modified as new categories emerged. The researcher compared themes that emerged in the teacher librarian’s role with those that emerged in the literacy coach’s role to determine how each professional supports students and teachers in the area of reading, and if any collaboration takes place between the two roles. The findings are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

According to AASL (2010), multiple research studies have confirmed that there is a correlation between school library programs staffed by certified school librarians and increased student achievement; yet, many schools are also beginning to employ literacy coaches to improve reading achievement. This addition, with the teacher librarian already a well-established part of the school system, and playing a vital role in supporting students' reading achievement, necessitates a clear definition of roles. The purpose of this case study was to analyze roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches and to determine how schools can utilize one or both of these positions to maximize effective teaching and learning of reading.

A case study methodology was used for this research. Three teacher librarians and one literacy coach, all from the same school district, participated in semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) conducted via Zoom. The interviews were coded and the constant comparative method was used to find comparisons between roles.

Teacher Librarian Support for Students

The first research question aimed at finding out how teacher librarians support students in the area of reading. When directly asked how they support students in the area of reading, the most common response from participants was that they help students find just right books. One participant summarizes this in her statement: "I help students find books at their reading level and interest level for them to check out in the library." Another concurred, "I teach them to enjoy reading and I encourage them to find books that are just right for them."

A just right book is one that provides a little bit of a challenge for the student. It should be a book that the student finds interesting and can be read with a small amount of assistance (“A Practical Guide to Selecting ‘Just Right’ Books, 2015). Teacher librarians have a vast knowledge of their collections, and also have the opportunity to work with each student in their building. As they get to know the interests and abilities of their patrons, they can recommend books that will engage students and keep them reading.

In order to ensure that students can find a book that’s just right for them, the librarians work to develop a quality collection. “I try to make sure that the books that the children receive are quality material,” one participant said. “Making sure, if possible, that they’re at their correct reading level; however, realizing that children also need choice and are able to choose outside of their reading level. We make sure that kids enjoy the materials that they receive.”

All participants reported operating their library on a mixed schedule. They see each class in the school once during their six-day cycle. During these scheduled visits, the participants reported teaching information literacy skills, computer skills, and how to read nonfiction. It seems as though these lessons are taught in isolation, as “just in case” lessons, not necessarily related to curricular needs, or “just in time” learning (McGregor, 2006).

The remainder of the time, the library and teacher librarian are available on a flexible schedule. The only mention of how this flexible time is used ties back to supporting students in finding just right books. “It’s a lot easier to figure out what they should be reading when they come in one on one. When they check out, I try to work with them at that time.”

There is evidence that the participants value developing a collection that supports curriculum and meets the needs and interests of their readers, which is one of the school librarian's roles in reading, according to AASL's position statement (2010). There is also evidence of working with whole classes and small groups to deliver reading comprehension instruction. However, these lessons do not seem to offer an interdisciplinary approach to literacy learning. AASL recommends co-planning, co-teaching, and co-evaluating units of study to increase student learning. Although the teacher librarians interviewed indicated teaching information literacy and some nonfiction reading skills, there was no indication that these lessons were planned or taught with classroom teachers to help students at their point of need. Rather, these lessons seemed to be taught in isolation from what was happening in classrooms. This is likely due to the fact that the teacher librarians have classes in the library during classroom teacher planning time, so there is limited opportunity for true collaboration, such as co-planning or co-teaching lessons. This is discussed further in the next section.

Teacher Librarian Support for Teachers

The second research question was designed to determine how teacher librarians support other teachers in the area of reading. Pulling resources for teachers was one of the key areas in which teacher librarians supported classroom teachers. Participants stated they are often called on to find a mentor text for a unit of study or locate appropriate resources for students when they are doing research.

Another way participants reported supporting classroom teachers was ordering and leveling resources to develop classroom libraries. One participant stated, "I did research to find specific Lexile levels to match each grade level and specific genres to

order” using the same criteria as ordering for the school library. These criteria include using resources, such as *Children’s Core Collection*, to find recommended texts appropriate for elementary students. Additionally, teacher librarians read reviews in professional journals, and followed selection policies as outlined in their school’s library policy manual.

Incorporating technology was also indicated as a support teacher librarians provided for teachers in this study. One participant explained:

I incorporate the technology that they can use as a supplement to their teaching. So if they’re doing vocabulary, I introduce different vocabulary websites that students can use to help strengthen their vocabulary. I also get them started on BookFlix and Tumblebooks and other electronic book sources that we have that they can access from the classroom that we may not have in print format.

Although not included in the position statement for teacher librarians’ role in teaching reading, teacher librarians, as information specialists and educators, often assume a leadership role in integrating technology (Johnston, 2012). In this case study, it is evident that classroom teachers and literacy coaches are benefitting from teacher librarians as leaders in the use and integration of technology.

Although developing strong collections and being a leader in using technology are certainly important roles for a teacher librarian, collaboration when planning, teaching, and assessing was noticeably absent from participant responses. AASL (2010) states that teacher librarians should, “partner with classroom teachers, specialists and other literacy colleagues to make decisions about reading initiatives and reading comprehension instruction.” Yet only one participant mentioned coordinating, “what their units are with

what I teach in the library,” while also noting, “I haven’t actually been part of the planning process.” Many of the skills identified in AASL’s *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* (2007) require reading comprehension strategies. As such, teacher librarians are knowledgeable and trained in incorporating reading comprehension strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, questioning, and interpreting information. Teacher librarians should have dedicated time to meet with classroom teachers to discuss how they can support reading comprehension authentically. This may include pushing into classrooms or teaching lessons in the library, and could involve the whole class, small groups, or individuals.

As mentioned before, the teacher librarian participants teach classes in the library during classroom teacher planning time, so there are limited opportunities for collaborating to plan authentic, interdisciplinary lessons that support reading comprehension. This limits the potential impact of teacher librarians on student achievement. As AASL (2013) states, “By integrating their own agendas with those of the classroom teachers, the specialists can have a larger impact than they otherwise could by carrying out a ‘curriculum’ of their own.”

Literacy Coaches Support for Students

When asked about supporting students in the area of reading, the literacy coach participant noted working with individuals, small groups, and whole classes.

Most frequently, the literacy coach works with a small group of two to three students who are identified as “struggling readers or writers.” These students are from the class with which the literacy coach works most closely, to ensure alignment between the intervention and classroom instruction. One on one work with students occurs during

assessment time, when the literacy coach is conducting screening assessments or diagnostic reading assessments. Whole class instruction only takes place when the literacy coach is modeling a lesson or teaching strategy for the classroom teacher; therefore, it is an indirect support of students, and provides a support to the classroom teacher.

Of the literacy coach roles identified by the International Literacy Association (ILA, 2004), two address working with students: instructing students to learn about their strengths and needs and assisting with assessing students. The literacy coach participant reported performing both of these roles. In addition, the literacy coach modeled lessons for the whole class, which is another of the roles identified by ILA.

Literacy Coach Support for Teachers

The literacy coach fulfills many of the roles and qualifications indicated in the ILA position statement when supporting classroom teachers. One such role is co-planning lessons. “I try to help with the planning portion of their lesson delivery focusing mostly on the Common Core. In our district we have a large population of English language learners, so we try to integrate the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model into our planning.”

Another support, as mentioned previously, is modeling and discussing lessons and visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers. The literacy coach explained:

I do demonstration for teachers, whether it's large group or small group, and then I do coaching cycles - pre-conference, observation, post-conference - with teachers regarding new learning or if they're implementing or wanting to refine a new teaching strategy or skill.

The literacy coach also indicated that there is dedicated time each cycle to meet with each grade level team. There is a commitment to collaboration and communication between the literacy coaches and classroom teachers. The literacy coach has a knowledge of what is being taught in the classroom and can support students and teachers in a timely, authentic manner.

Professional Development

Participants were asked what kind of professional development (PD), if any, they provide for staff, to see how they further support reading in their buildings. Each of the teacher librarians and the literacy coach interviewed provide professional development for staff, both district and building-wide.

Each of the teacher librarians reported providing professional development regarding the resources available to teachers and students, as well as technology. “The PD that I’m allowed to do is more towards what resources are available. I do a lot with technology,” one participant remarked. Another teacher librarian responded similarly saying, “I do a lot of technology building. Talking about different programs that will help them. We also do at the beginning of the year AEA resources, the Destiny library program, and Google PD. A lot of basic technology more so than anything.”

“This year the focus as a building, and as a district as well, has been literacy. The literacy coaches have had a lot of PD time,” one teacher librarian responded. Similarly, another librarian said, “In the area of reading, our literacy coach is the one that does the PD.” The response from the literacy coach verifies this.

“Typically our Wednesdays in our district are identified for professional learning, so I provide whole staff professional learning around literacy.” This time is split between

English language learner (ELL) support, math, and literacy, so generally the literacy coach presents once per month. Some examples of support provided during these meetings include learning about components of reading workshop, such as conferring; learning how to analyze running records; and how to effectively run guided reading groups. Because their district has such a large population of English language learners, the literacy coach also tries to incorporate the SIOP model into professional development sessions, so teachers see the strategies as integrated into the literacy curriculum.

The ILA position statement says that literacy coaches should make professional development presentations for teachers, and AASL's position statement indicates that librarians should provide and participate in continual professional development in reading that reflects current research in the area of reading instruction and promotion. While both the teacher librarians and the literacy coach reported providing professional development, the teacher librarians seem to focus on resources and technology, rather than on supporting teachers in the area of reading instruction and promotion. That role seems to lie solely with the literacy coach. This is a missed opportunity for teacher librarians to take a leadership role in organizing and promoting literacy projects and events, as well as an opportunity for the teacher librarians and literacy coaches to collaborate in their efforts to inform staff about best practice in literacy.

Collaboration

Teacher librarians and literacy coaches were asked if they collaborate with one another, and to describe what the relationship is like and how they support each other.

The teacher librarians noted that their literacy coach served as a liaison between the classroom and the library, because literacy coaches have the opportunity to meet

regularly with classroom teachers while teacher librarians are with students during teacher planning time. “She actually goes into the classroom and has that time with the teachers,” one librarian said. Another teacher librarian responded in kind, saying, “Whenever I have something new that I think will be helpful to the teachers I introduce it to her first and then she either sets up a time for me to meet with her and the teachers, or she can introduce it to them.” Another participant added:

I try to talk to her a little about where classes are at, to figure out for my own lessons so I can build off of what they’ve learned in the classroom to continue in the library for research and that stuff and she helped provide some of that communication.

Another area in which teacher librarians noted collaboration was in selecting materials and developing classroom libraries. “Anytime we purchase materials for the classroom libraries or the book room, she and I complete that list together,” one participant said. Another replied, “I try to [collaborate]. Especially when purchasing books. That was a big thing, talking about mentor texts. We had very close communication trying to make sure we were filling all the holes that classroom teachers needed.”

Collaboration also occurs when integrating technology. One teacher librarian explains how she works with a literacy coach:

She’ll come in and say, “I really want to do something with technology. I want the fourth grade classes to do something with technology in the area of reading. What do you suggest?” We’ll do things like set up blogs. Or an example, third grade is doing a PowToon based on fables. So they learned about fables then

created an animation about fables using PowToon. So that's the type of collaborating that I do.

The literacy coach also notes technology as being an area of collaboration. "Probably the biggest collaboration occurs around assessment time because a lot of our assessments are technology based. So I need to collaborate with her setting up class rosters and getting students into the computer lab." She goes on to explain, "As far as really integrating technology into literacy that's an area that we really haven't done a good job with as of late."

As the literacy coach noted, setting up computers for assessment is not an example of collaboration that supports student learning in the area of reading. Johnston (2012) states that technology integration should be seamless and used as a resource to enhance the learning in the content areas. Based on the teacher librarian's response, there is evidence that some collaboration is happening to enhance literacy. This is an area of expertise which teacher librarians could promote when collaborating with classroom teachers and specialists, such as literacy coaches.

Partnering with classroom teachers, specialists, and other literacy colleagues to make decisions about reading initiatives and reading comprehension instruction is one of the AASL position statement recommendations. However, the teacher librarians interviewed report that most of their partnering or collaboration is limited and often revolves around collection management or technology, with little focus on reading comprehension or instruction. AASL recognizes that developing and having an awareness and "deep knowledge of the wide variety of authentic reading materials available in the school library and beyond" is an important role of the teacher librarian;

however, they also have “a key role in supporting print and online reading comprehension strategy instruction in collaboration with classroom teachers and reading specialists” (AASL, 2010). This authentic collaboration and support for reading comprehension seems to be lacking, and is a missed opportunity to maximize reading instruction and learning.

Summary

The aim of this study was to determine how teacher librarians and literacy coaches support students and teachers in the area of reading, and how they collaborate with one another.

Overall, the teacher librarians interviewed do not directly instruct students in reading comprehension. However, they do develop and maintain collections that support the curriculum and meet student needs and interests, and encourage students to choose just right books that foster a love of reading. Literacy coaches work with small groups of students to improve reading skills, and pull students individually to assist with reading assessment.

To support classroom teachers, librarians most frequently reported developing classroom libraries and helping to integrate technology and support research lessons. When providing professional development for their staff, librarians highlight resources and services available in the library. During their dedicated meeting times with classroom teachers, literacy coaches co-plan lessons and units with teachers, focusing on the Common Core State Standards and integrating the SIOP model. They also model lessons to improve instructional practices. Literacy coaches provide professional development for

their staff to improve practices in reading workshop, guided reading, and assessing reading.

Collaboration between teacher librarians and literacy coaches occurs when there is a need to integrate technology or order materials. Additionally, teacher librarians use the literacy coach as a liaison to determine what is happening in classrooms and align instruction in the library accordingly.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to AASL (2010), multiple research studies have confirmed that there is a correlation between school library programs staffed by certified school librarians and increased student achievement; yet, many schools are also beginning to employ literacy coaches to improve reading achievement. With the teacher librarian being a well-established part of the school system, and playing a vital role in supporting students' reading achievement, a clear definition of roles is needed. The purpose of this case study was to analyze roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches and to determine how schools can utilize one or both of these positions to maximize effective teaching and learning of reading.

Conclusions

AASL's (2010) position statement reminds us that, "while the responsibility for the successful implementation of reading promotion and instruction is shared by the entire school community, library programs serve as hubs of literacy learning in the school." However, that does not seem to be the situation in this case study.

When supporting students in the area of reading, teacher librarians seem to have an indirect impact. They develop and maintain collections that meet the needs and interests of students and help them understand how to choose just right books that will foster a love and enjoyment of reading. Although the teacher librarians interviewed all have scheduled time with students in their building, ensuring time for whole class instruction, most reported using the time for information literacy skills and technology integration. Although there is some reading comprehension instruction, mainly with

nonfiction texts related to research, direct instruction in the area of reading happens more often with literacy coaches. Additionally, these whole class lessons seem to be isolated from what is happening in classrooms, rather than aligning with curricular needs, as evidenced by participants.

The position statement on the school librarian's role in reading emphasizes collaborative instruction between classroom teachers and teacher librarians in order to maximize student learning. Consistent communication between classroom teachers and the teacher librarians would allow teacher librarians to plan lessons that support and extend what is happening in classrooms. This might include teaching research strategies, meeting with book clubs or literature circle groups to discuss responses to readings, or helping students to use technology to create a product that expresses new understandings - all of which are skills noted in AASL's (2007) *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*.

Assisting with assessments and instructing students to learn about their strengths and needs are the only two coaching activities noted in the ILA position statement that call for literacy coaches to directly support students. The remainder of the coaching activities requires working with and supporting colleagues.

“Practicing responsive collection development and supporting print-rich environments that reflect the curriculum and diverse learning needs of the school community” is one of the roles of a teacher librarian indicated in AASL's position statement, and teacher librarian participants indicated supporting classroom teachers in this way by developing both the school library and classroom library collections. There is no dedicated time for teacher librarians to meet with classroom teachers to collaborate. This lack of direct communication likely prevents the teacher librarian from providing

true “just in time” instruction in the library that supports and extends what is happening in classrooms. Rather, the most common support to teachers referenced was in assisting with whole class research instruction or helping to integrate technology. Although not named as a school librarian’s role in reading, both of these are important skills cited in *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*, and certainly an important role of the school librarian as an information specialist.

Literacy coaches work directly with teachers to support the planning and development of lessons and units, as well as model lessons to help improve reading instruction. These are expected activities as noted in ILA’s position statement. Because they have a dedicated planning time with classroom teachers, they often act as a liaison between classroom teachers and teacher librarians to inform librarians what is happening in the classroom, or to relay ideas from the librarian to classroom teachers.

Collaboration between teacher librarians and literacy coaches once again hinges on resources and materials, such as selecting and ordering mentor texts, and integrating technology. The ILA position statement does not indicate that literacy coaches play a role in technology integration; however, they are expected to develop and provide materials for colleagues. Therefore, it is appropriate that literacy coaches are looking to teacher librarians to recommend ways to integrate technology, as well as an expert on materials and resources available to support teachers and students.

There is no mention of collaborating to improve teaching or learning in the area of reading comprehension, which is a missed opportunity to maximize reading instruction by utilizing the expertise of all teachers, including librarians, in the building. Ideally, the classroom teacher, literacy coach, and teacher librarian would all have a time to meet

together to align curriculum and lessons to ensure that the instruction and learning happening in the library is authentic and relevant. Additionally, the teacher librarian should be used as a resource to support students in reading comprehension, beyond just choosing just right books.

Recommendations

The intention to have both a teacher librarian and a literacy coach in each building is positive. Stakeholders understand the value of both professionals and the importance of reading instruction and enjoyment. However, there are missed opportunities to use the teacher librarians and literacy coaches in the most effective way. Currently, the literacy coach is acting as a liaison between classroom teachers and teacher librarians. This is inefficient and does not allow for reciprocal sharing of ideas. Dedicated planning time with classroom teachers, teacher librarians, and literacy coaches all at the table would ensure that there is consistency and authenticity in instruction. Meeting all together would create a timely feedback loop, allowing teacher librarians, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers to share ideas and get immediate feedback, offer suggestions, or clarify misunderstandings. During scheduled class times, librarians could then provide “just in time” instruction that would be relevant to what is happening in their classrooms. Flexible time could be used to co-teach lessons with classroom teachers or literacy coaches, or work with individual or small groups of students.

From a teacher librarian perspective, it seems that by having both a librarian and literacy coach, the expectations ordinarily placed on a teacher librarian to support reading no longer exist, or are minimal. Many participants noted that when it comes to reading, the literacy coaches take the lead - when working with students and when leading

professional development. However, teacher librarians also have an expertise to offer in this area. Teacher librarians specialize in skills such as responding to literature in various formats and genres, applying critical thinking skills when reading nonfiction texts, organizing information and ideas, and making inferences to develop new understandings, just to name a few. Therefore, it really would be a benefit to the students and teachers to utilize librarians when planning, teaching, and implementing reading initiatives. In a setting such as the one in this case study, with both a teacher librarian and literacy coach employed in one building, it would be beneficial at the beginning of the school year to establish roles, goals, and expectations for each professional, and plan how more consistent and effective collaboration can take place, involving classroom teachers, teacher librarians, and literacy coaches.

Thus in order to best utilize both teacher librarians' and literacy coaches' specialized, yet overlapping, skills, it is important not to further segment their specialties. Students will benefit most when teacher librarians, classroom teachers, and literacy coaches work in the highest levels of collaboration. While it may initially appear to be more strategic to utilize teacher librarians as collection managers, resource providers, research instructors, and technology integrationists; while literacy coaches provide leadership in professional development and reading instruction and assessment, it is more beneficial to students when these professionals cross train and collaborate as much as possible. Both the ILA and AASL positions statements call for literacy coaches and teacher librarians to partner with colleagues to make decisions about reading initiatives and reading comprehension instruction. For example, the teacher librarians in this case study did this when they shared resource suggestions with literacy coaches, who in turn

shared them with the classroom teachers. Likewise, consistent collaboration may present the opportunity for teacher librarians to also cross train and learn about classroom reading instruction and assessment, and to implement this in library instruction. For example, creating common language and expectations, such as using the workshop model or SIOP strategies in both the classroom and library, will maximize instructional practice and benefit students.

This case study sample provided more insight into the roles of teacher librarians than literacy coaches. In future studies, it would be beneficial to have a larger sample, with an equal number of teacher librarians and literacy coaches.

Future studies may also utilize surveys or research diaries in addition to interviews. This may be done over one six-day cycle, or perhaps over one month to get a more complete picture, especially in the area of professional development. Participants might be given the roles as recommended by the ILA's and AASL's position statements, then be asked to indicate how many times they performed each role, with an annotation providing a summary of what exactly was done.

It might also be beneficial to include classroom teacher perceptions, to ascertain their view of the roles of a teacher librarian and literacy coach when it comes to reading support.

This case study showed the roles of teacher librarians and literacy coaches in a unique setting, one where each building in a district employs both professionals. It may be interesting to conduct another case study of the roles and responsibilities of teacher librarians and literacy coaches where they work in isolation, and compare the results to those of the professionals in this case study.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview

1. How do you directly support students in the area of reading?
(Possible probe questions: Do you teach lessons to whole classes? Do you work one-on-one with students in any way?)
2. When collaborating with teachers, how do you support them in the area of reading?
(Possible probe questions: Do you help develop units of study for reading? Do you model lessons? Do you pull resources?)
3. What types of professional development do you lead for your staff, if any?
4. Do you collaborate with your building teacher librarian / literacy coach? If so, tell me about what that relationship is like and how you support one another.

APPENDIX B

Key Terms for Constant Comparison

Literacy Coaches from International Literacy Association http://www.reading.org/Libraries/position-statements-and-resolutions/ps1065_reading_coach.pdf	Teacher Librarians from AASL Position Statement - School Librarian's Role in Reading http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/resources/statements/reading-role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations with colleagues (identifying issues or needs, setting goals, problem solving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model & collaboratively teach reading comprehension strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and providing materials for/with colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-design, co-teach, & co-assess units of study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing curriculum with colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practice responsive collection development that reflect curriculum, learning needs, and interest of readers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in professional development activities with colleagues (conferences, workshops) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take a leadership role in organizing and promoting literacy projects and events that engage learners and motivate them to become lifelong readers (i.e. book sale, visiting authors, Book Week, reading programs or competitions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading or participating in Study Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide and participate in continual professional development in reading that reflects current research in the area of reading instruction and promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting with assessing students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan learning experiences that offer whole classes, small groups, and individual learners an interdisciplinary approach to literacy learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructing students to learn about their strengths and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partner with classroom teachers, specialists and other literacy colleagues to make decisions about reading initiatives and reading comprehension instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-planning lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexibly scheduled library so that students and teachers have unlimited physical and intellectual access to a wide range of materials.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding team meetings (grade level, reading teachers) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing student work 	

• Interpreting assessment data (helping teachers use results for instructional decision making)		
• Individual discussions with colleagues about teaching and learning		
• Making professional development presentations for teachers		
• Modeling and discussing lessons		
• Co-teaching lessons		
• Visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers		
• Analyzing videotape lessons of teachers		
• Doing lesson study with teachers		