

Sandra Lemke
Action Research Project
TE 893

Action Research Project
at Edison Elementary School in Omaha, Nebraska

Introduction/Description of Weakness or Problem

I completed my practicum hours at Edison Elementary School Library Media Center with Library Media Specialist, Sharon Childers. The elementary library media center was a very busy place and had a little different atmosphere than the high school library media center where I have done some of my other practicum hours. There was a different grade/group of students that came in as an entire class every 35 minutes or so, and each student in the school (~400 students) checked out books once a week, so the circulation was crazy and the library media specialist was constantly shelving books whenever there was a minute or two of down time. Sharon, the library media specialist was the only one in the library, she had no para-educator, and no student aides. She barely had any time to take care of the management and administration side of the library, which she had to do completely on her own. The only relief or help that she had was another librarian in the district happened to travel and teach library media 2 half days each week, however, this librarian did not help with any of the administration or management part of the library, she just relieved Sharon of teaching time in the library media center.

After working the first couple of hours of my practicum with Sharon in the library media center at Edison Elementary, I started to realize this not having any assistance in the library might be a problem. After looking at the School Library Program Assessment Rubric (AASL, 2010) with Sharon, we both decided that the Staffing quantity would fall under Basic and the Collaboration Team Roles were informal and unassigned. We decided these went hand in hand, and the basic staffing ended up having a negative effect on the Collaboration piece of the School Library Media Specialist. To address this issue, I chose to learn about effective ways for the School Library Media Specialist to collaborate with teachers and encourage the teachers to use the open library time to their advantage. I also surveyed staff on if they were aware there

was open library time that they could co-teach and collaborate with the library media specialist as well as if they have actually used this open library time to their advantage this school year or plan to use it in the future. With this data and research, Sharon and I could come up with a plan to make collaboration more effective and possibly even bring it to the districts attention to give Sharon some more assistance in the Edison Elementary.

Literature Review

There are several issues and problems with education nowadays, such as increased student needs as the number of students from diverse backgrounds and low or failing test scores growing, resources are starting to diminish, an excessive amount of information is available through technology creating a more complex learning environment, and education starting to require creative ways of meeting outcomes while engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. As mentioned by Montiel-Overall, School library media specialists (SLMS) play a major role in addressing these problems/issues by collaborating with teachers. Collaboration is an essential responsibility of library media specialists (Montiel-Overall, 2005).

Two items that inhibit and help facilitate collaboration identified by Montiel-Overall are time and the school principal (2005). These two factors affect how often the SLMS and teachers can meet and the levels of involvement from both ends. The synergy created from teacher and SLMS collaboration will infuse instruction with new ideas. Collaboration at this intellectual level of thinking will have the most impact on student learning outcomes because it helps in developing critical thinking skills (Montiel-Overall, 2005).

Key to successful collaboration is the principal. Collaboration cannot be successful without the support of the principal. It is important for the principal to mediate collaboration, not necessarily having to be present or involved, but must know what collaboration is and how it can be supported. It is critical that the principal provides time for collaboration by arranging schedules for meetings between the collaborators and flexibility in teaching and library hours (Montiel-Overall, 2005).

Elementary SLMS who see the media center as an extension of the classroom recognize it is essential to provide access for students to the library materials when needed. Traditionally

elementary school libraries have a fixed schedule, often weekly, like at Edison Elementary. I could see during the practicum hours at Edison Elementary, the library was more seen as a drop-off spot, where students can be sent to be read to or to be taught 21st century learner skills while the teacher spends his or her time on something of greater value, plan time. The potential of the SLMS and the media center are not realized when teachers and administrators view them merely as a solution to the problem of providing planning time to teachers. The SLMS should be able to provide access to information, model appropriate inquiry behavior, collaborate with teachers, promote the use of information and technology, and use information literacy standards to guide student learning (McGregor, 2006).

A relationship between flexible scheduling and collaborative planning and teaching has been identified according to McGregor's research. Having a mix between flexible and fixed schedule may provide a greater opportunity for collaborative planning and effective support on inquiry based learning (McGregor, 2006).

With 21st century learning skills now is a particularly crucial time for teachers and school librarians to be working together to educate students in the skills needed to be successful in the digital age (Latham, 2013).

Data Collection

Data was collected by conducting a survey of the teaching staff at Edison Elementary School. The intent of the survey was to get information and ideas in order to help improve the collaboration between Sharon, the LMS and the teachers in the building. The survey was pretty short and sweet in hopes that the teachers would not be overwhelmed and would be willing to fill it out. I also did some investigating of other Elementary School Libraries in the metro area on how their schedules were arranged to inhibit collaboration between the teaching staff and the LMS.

Organization and Interpretation of Data

A short survey was conducted of the teaching staff from Edison Elementary. The purpose of the survey was to find out how teachers would like to use the library in collaboration with the LMS.

Survey Data

Results from Edison Elementary Teaching Staff Surveys (21 Responses)

Question	Responses		
Are you aware that there is an "open library" time available for you to use in collaboration with Mrs. Childers as a resource?	100% said Yes (21)	0% said No (0)	
Have you signed up to use open library time this school year?	38.1% said Yes (8)	61.9% said No (13)	
If you have signed up to use the open library time, did you have the opportunity to sit down with Mrs. Childers before the time you signed up to collaborate on what you wanted to do with your students during this open library time?	Out of the 8 responses that said Yes to the previous question, 7 of the 8 responded Yes, and 1 responded No.		
Would you be interested in using this open library time in the future?	57.1% said Yes (12)	14.3% said Maybe (3)	28.6% said No (6)

After discussing with Laura Pietsch, the Director of Library Services in Omaha Public Schools, all of the Elementary Schools in Omaha Public Schools are on a fixed schedule, and have very little open library time. Being specialists, the Library Media Specialists in the Elementary Schools in Omaha Public Schools are scheduled to see every student at least 2 times in a 10-day cycle. So, making a change to go from fixed to flexible schedule would be an extreme change within the entire district, so possibly just working on the staffing situation so the Library Media Specialist at Edison Elementary has time to collaborate with teachers.

Based on the data collected in the survey I see the communication and effectiveness of the open library time and collaboration between teacher and library media specialist is not that appealing to the teaching staff. Only 12 of the 21 teaching staff that responded (~60%) were even interested in using the open library time and interested in collaborating with the library media specialist.

Plan for Implementation of Changes

After collecting data and discussing the staffing and schedule at other similar Elementary Schools in the District, we decided it would best to focus on the collaboration aspect of the research. Asking for a more flexible schedule and possibly more staff didn't seem like it would be likely to happen, since all the Elementary Schools in OPS are having similar issues. It would be an extreme change for the entire district in order to change the scheduling and finding more staff to arrange to have more open library time in each library. The only option that seems feasible would be to recruit some student aides from the older grade levels who could help with some checking out/in processes and possibly shelving books. Once we have trained some student aides to assist in the library, this would allow for some of the minor duties to be relieved from the library media specialist, hopefully allowing for more time to spend on collaboration with the teaching staff.

The data collected in the survey made it seem like the collaboration between the teaching staff and library media specialist was not that appealing to the teaching staff. Only 60% of the teaching staff was even interested in this collaboration opportunity, so I think the plan is to focus on a way to make this collaboration time more appealing to the teaching staff.

To do this, the library media specialist will have to do some promoting, and possibly reaching out to the teachers.

Ideas for making collaboration more appealing to teaching staff

*Promote Library Media Specialist at In-Service Days, show off Library Media Specialists skills in information literacy and technology by presenting at In-Service Days.

*Build relationships with staff members.

*Help with tech training and trouble shooting issues in the building. Get involved in solving teaching staff issues, so they begin to appreciate you as the Library Media Specialist and as a go to in the building. The more interaction the LMS has with the teaching staff, the more relationships you will build with staff.

*Get the building principal on board. Need time to do collaboration, will need the building principal to be supportive of this collaboration between LMS and teaching staff, and also to allow time for this collaboration to occur.

*Work with the 60% of teachers who are interested in collaborating as much as possible, and encourage them to share their experiences with the other 40% of the staff.

*Look more closely at which teachers were not interested in collaborating, and maybe just share some small ideas with them to show them you are there to support them.

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