Getting to first base: Developing support from school principals

Ken Haycock, San Jose State University

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So Micromedia Serials in Microform Catalogue and choose from Canadian Business. They're an ideal solution for building support for new programs, as well as for accounting for existing levels of support. In order to develop an environment for support and assistance, a few guidelines are useful.

### Plan a Strategy

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

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

### Center Regularly

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

### Communicate Effectively

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

### Be Professional

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

### Involve the Administrator

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

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Providing an adequate number and variety of materials is essential to the success of the program. Too often teacher-librarians attempt to purchase a wide range of materials on a wide range of topics without sufficient depth and scope of those units where the library is used for resource-based learning.
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It is essential that the district provide in-service opportunities for principals and teachers-librarians as partners in quality education. A one or two day program under recognized leadership will provide structured opportunities for discussion and action, resolution of existing problems, and alternatives for their resolution. In-service programs will also provide opportunities for an administrator to view the potential of the library from the perspective of his/her colleagues as well.

Be Visible

Make sure that the library is on the agenda for staff meetings, and that there are displays in the staff room. Provide an agenda for staff meetings, that the school administrators often do not have as much information about, and experience with, school libraries as is desirable. The future of school librarianship in Canada must not be decided too quickly with those who ensure that teachers become knowledgeable and experienced in planning and developing school teaching units with teachers-librarians, integrating research and study skills in their programs. As long as we are willing to take the time to teacher requests rather than to initiate cooperative programs, we are going to continue to have teachers without any knowledge of school library services promoted to positions of administrative responsibility, and we will wonder why we cannot yet get the level of support that we require from these administrators.

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

President's Memo

Ted Monkhouse

This January I represented CSLA at the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) triennial forum "Education For Life and Work." In Ottawa, I am also attending another CTF forum on "Multiculturalism in Schools" in April. It is gratifying to have this association with CTF, a natural alliance considering our primary allegiance to education. I hope that you are pleased with the new journal that the editorial board has worked hard to develop. Our problem has been CSLA's commitment to make School Librarians in Canada financially independent. A scheme for this has just been approved by the CTF board that involves financing through subscription sales, advertising, and other fund raising methods that we feel to be realistic. It will also mean that the executive board will be "under the gun" from now on to keep School Libraries in Canada alive.

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

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