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Evaluation of the teacher-librarian: A discussion guide

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EVALUATION
of the Teacher-Librarian:
A Discussion Guide

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Evaluation:
The Person or the Program?

Evaluation of the teacher-librarian (TL) is a difficult area for many school administrators. Too often it is confused with evaluation of the "library program" itself, which is a much larger and more complex matter. In working with principals, teachers and teacher-librarians, it is often useful to separate the evaluation of the TL alone — carrying both the total responsibility of one person and the accountability therein. This is not only foolhardy — why be accountable for a lack of district support? — but also egocentric in the extreme — how do you develop an effective program without administrator and teacher commitment?

Evaluation of the program involves two significant components — quantitative measures together with a variety of qualitative contributions.

Quantitatively, the TL does not determine the amount of time allocated to the position, does not decide on the level of clerical support, does not single-handedly build the facility for effective use, does not prescribe the nature and delivery of district consultative and management services, does not write the budget figures, does not make purchasing policy, and so on. Others make these decisions and others must be accountable for them since they all, each and every one of them, have an enormous impact on the effect of the program.

Qualitatively, the program is a partnership — a partnership of the teacher, teacher-librarian, principal and school district. Each of the partners has an essential role to play in the development and implementation of a high quality, integrated program of resource-based teaching and learning. Certainly, the techer-librarian is a key player, but not a solitary one. Each of the partners has specific skills, experiences, resources and responsibilities which bear on the nature and extent of the program.

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The evaluation of the teacher-librarian, then, is one ingredient and only one ingredient, in the mix. Nevertheless, having stated these parameters, the evaluation of the teacher-librarian should be a critical force in the ongoing professional development of both principal and TL. Two issues arise here, however. Many principals are uncertain of criteria for evaluation of the teacher-librarian and find contractual criteria and obligations very limiting for those in non-classroom teaching positions. Many teacher-librarians, on the other hand, are concerned about knowledgeable principals since the role description of the TL can be so broad and encompassing as to make it nearly impossible to achieve a level of success and job satisfaction.

This brief guide attempts to address both of these concerns. It is by no means perfect, since only a locally-developed instrument can reach that lofty ideal. It does, however, provide a vehicle for the education of principals in the role of the TL and it likewise does provide a vehicle for the TL and principal to establish priorities together and assess the extent of implementation together. In this supervisory cycle the TL has much to gain from the professional insight of the administrator.

Two factors are necessary to guarantee a mutually rewarding experience: discussion of relative priorities and discussion of degree of implementation. It is not possible that everything be a high priority, nor is it possible that everything be well-implemented; program development is, after all, an ongoing activity.

As professional teachers, however, TLs must demonstrate the skills necessary to work with teacher colleagues to diagnose learning needs, jointly prescribe and develop programs to address those needs, and assess the extent to which the program has been successful in addressing the needs determined. The principal will want to examine three major areas: observation of the TL in planning sessions with colleagues, observation of the TL actually teaching, and observation of the management of the resource center itself. Too often we have focussed on the latter to the detriment of this unique teaching role.

A Framework

During the past two decades, schools have been struggling to adapt to the changing needs of society. What has emerged is an institution which focuses on the development of individuals who are prepared to think rationally and logically for themselves and to assume responsibilities. To develop students of this type has meant that schools have had to emphasize learner-oriented methods such as guided discovery and inquiry as well as traditional teacher-oriented methods.

This broadening of educational methodology has had a great impact on school libraries. Many teacher-librarians have been leaders in understanding and focusing on the expanding variety of teaching

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approaches and student experiences which the changing needs of society require. It is fact, however, that the inclusion of inquiry, individualization and independent study programs has placed many additional demands on the library and on the librarian. The need today is for the teacher-librarian to be a highly skilled teacher, able to function on the school team as a professional with competencies from teacher education and classroom experience as well as competencies from school librarianship and media services. Similarly, the library has moved from being a subject and merely a place, to a service and a concept, a learning resource center for teachers and students.

Expectations for teacher-librarians are very high. It is expected that a TL will be in the forefront of curriculum and professional development services, will be familiar with the full range of

instructional strategies and learning styles, will be able to organize time, personnel and materials to maximize utilization of each and will be active in professional concerns within the school and the district.

For the TL to achieve these expectations, adequate support staff is essential to free the professional from clerical and technical tasks. School districts must recognize this need if the potential of the teacher-librarian and resource center is to be realized.

It should be noted that successful completion of formal course work will not guarantee success as a teacher-librarian. Personality factors, interpersonal relations skills, creativity, flexibility, professional commitment, and willingness to participate in continuing education, should be major factors in evaluating a teacher-librarian.

Recent advances in education make it essential that the teacher-librarian demonstrate the competencies outlined to the degree possible and reasonably if the resource center is to offer an educational service which is vital to the school's instructional program.

General Considerations

1. There is a written role description for the teacher-librarian; minimum academic qualifications have been specified and are in place.

2. The program is viewed as a partnership of district, principal, classroom teacher and teacher-librarian. Each has a defined role in program development and is accountable for its implementation.

3. The resource center is flexibly scheduled after planning between the classroom teacher and teacher-librarian.

4. A school-based continuum of research and study skills has been developed by the staff and is used as a framework for cooperative program planning and teaching.

5. The following allocations are provided to the fullest extent possible: teacher-librarian time; paid clerical assistance; budget for materials; physical facilities.

For quantitative guidelines refer to state/provincial and school district standards.

The Role of the Teacher-Librarian: Nine Areas of Competence

Although teacher-librarians have competence in the areas listed, services are offered on the basis of the school program and the availability of personnel, materials and facilities. Priorities are determined by the individual school since not all services will be offered in every school or to the same extent in all schools. Different approaches to evaluation are available to administrators, school staffs and teacher-librarians and several of these have been outlined in the professional literature and by professional associations.

1. *Administration* includes the ability to manage resource center programs, services and staff in order that these services may contribute to the stated educational goals of the school.

2. The *selection of learning resources* includes the ability to apply basic principles of evaluating learning resources for the purpose of developing a collection which will support the instructional program in the school.

3. The *acquisition, organization and circulation of learning resources* includes the professional tasks of classifying and cataloguing information and of organizing circulation procedures and the supervision of efficient and systematic technical and clerical support services.

4. *Guidance in reading, listening and viewing* includes the ability to assess student needs and interests and to provide resources which satisfy a given situation. Through this guidance students develop attitudes, appreciations and skills that motivate and stimulate the improved selection of appropriate learning resources.

5. The *design and production of learning resources* includes the ability to plan, design and produce materials for a specific instructional purpose, such as to improve communication effectiveness skills, where appropriate commercial materials are not available.

6. *Information services* includes the ability to use reference materials in seeking answers to questions. The learning resource teacher also acts as a liaison between the resource center/school and outside agencies for information services and resources.

7. The *promotion* of the effective use of learning resources and services includes the ability to alert users to the full range of available resources.

8. *Cooperative program planning and teaching* includes the ability to participate as a teaching partner in the accomplishment of identified learning objectives through a knowledge of recommended resources and appropriate teaching/learning strategies.

9. *Professionalism and leadership* includes the ability to develop and promote the use of the human and material resources of the school resource center and its facilities through cooperative professional activities.

ONE
Administration of the Learning Resource Program

Establish rapport with school staff, students and community.

Establish short and long range goals in terms of district guidelines and school objectives.

Select, supervise and plan for the effective use of resource center staff.

Recruit, select, train and motivate adult and student volunteers.

Invite and accept suggestions from teaching staff about the services the program provides.

Develop resource center facilities to support the objectives of the instructional program.

Plan for efficient use of space and equipment and for appropriate security for learning resources.

Plan and manage a flexible budget which reflects the instructional program.

Organize and develop staff, collections, budget, facilities and services to achieve objectives.

Maintain an inventory of materials and equipment.

Prepare oral and written reports on the resource center program.

Provide an environment conducive to learning.

Apply technological advances such as automation to resource center services.

Involve school staff in the evaluation of the effectiveness of resource center program in terms of district guidelines and school objectives.

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TWO
Selection of Learning Resources

Develop and implement criteria for the evaluation and selection of a wide range of resources.

Develop policies and procedures for the selection of learning resources which meet curricular, informational and recreational needs.

Build a collection of bibliographic and evaluative sources to provide current information about learning resources and equipment.

Organize teacher involvement in the preview, evaluation and selection of learning resources.

Develop extensive "consideration for purchase" files of book and nonbook media.

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THREE
Acquisition, Organization and Circulation of Learning Resources

Implement procedures for ordering, receiving and processing learning resources.

Classify and catalog learning resources as necessary and according to accepted standards.

Maintain an accurate catalog according to established rules.

Develop an efficient system for lending, renewing, reserving and recalling needed learning resources and equipment.

Route curriculum resources and professional materials.

Establish procedures for, and encourage the use of, interlibrary loans.

Select commercial cataloging services appropriate to school needs.

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FOUR
Reading, Listening and Viewing Guidance

Work with individuals and groups of students to provide direction, improve selection, and develop critical thinking.

Provide guidance for students and teachers during the school day and before and after school.

Share with students and teachers the joy of reading.

Promote appreciation and interest in the use of learning resources by giving book/media talks.

Develop storytelling, storyreading and other resource-centered programs for language development.

Assist students and teachers in the effective use of media.

Recommend to teachers learning resources in various formats which may assist in the accomplishment of specific learning objectives.

Advise teachers of "medium appropriateness" for particular instructional purposes.

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FIVE
Design and Production of Learning Resources

Advise students and teachers in media design and production through instruction and in-service programs.

Supervise the production of materials such as cassettes, slides, transparencies, talking books, video and slide/tape presentations.

Assist in the evaluation of media produced.

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SIX
Information and Reference Services

Answer, or obtain answers to, questions from teachers and students.

Provide guidance to teachers and students on locating information.

Develop a working relationship with public libraries, specialized libraries, other resource centers, community organizations, resource people and district resource services.

Locate specific information and resources found outside the school.

Participate in cooperative and coordinated projects within the district which involve the sharing of ideas, experiences and learning resources.

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SEVEN
Promotion of the Effective Use of Learning Resources and Services

Communicate effectively with teachers and administrators.

Develop an informational and public relations program for staff, students and the community.

Capitalize on themes through special promotions and media celebrations.

Develop bulletin boards, displays, and other publicity materials.

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EIGHT
Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching

Develop cooperatively with teachers a sequential list of media, research and study skills for cross-grade and cross-subject implementation.

Plan and develop units of work with teachers from the setting of objectives to evaluation.

Integrate media, research and study skills with classroom instruction for independent and continued learning.

Pre-plan with teachers and teach skills integrated with classroom instruction to large and small groups and individuals.

Integrate the planned use of learning resources with the educational program.

Provide leadership to develop programs which integrate the promotion of reading with the total school program and with individual teacher programs.

Initiate specific teaching units to encourage the acquisition of skills and the effective use of learning resources.

Provide curriculum-related book and nonbook media talks and celebrations.

Compile bibliographies, resource lists and book and nonbook media lists as needed.

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NINE
Professionalism and Leadership

Develop a strong team approach with other teachers.

Lead in-service education programs on the effective use of the resource center: criteria for selection of materials; designing resource-based units of study; using audio-visual equipment; promoting voluntary reading; media, research and study skill development; cooperative teaching; community resources.

Share techniques and strategies for using learning resources.

Involve students and staff in establishing learning resources policy and service guidelines.

Plan strategies for developing, presenting and securing support for learning resource services.

Serve on local and district curriculum committees.

Keep abreast of current developments in school librarianship, library and information science, media services and related fields.

Participate in the school's educational program by serving on advisory groups and committees and working with the student extracurricular program.

Take advantage of opportunities for continuing education and professional development.

Apply specific research findings and the principles of research to the development and improvement of resource center services.

Maintain membership and participate in professional education and library associations at the local, provincial and national levels.

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Documentation for the particular content of this instrument is based on the work of two committees chaired by the author: one to develop a role description for the teacher-librarian in the Vancouver public schools and the second to define competencies necessary for "qualified" teacher-librarians for the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA). The framework is taken from the resulting CSLA document The Qualifications of School Librarians.

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