Assignment 1: Interview with a Practicing School Librarian

Background and Reflection

I interviewed Ms. D., who is currently a Media Specialist at New Market Middle School in New Market, MD. This school has 461 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Lori has been the librarian there for 13 years, and has experience as a classroom teacher as well. She does not have a Media Assistant. Her library operates on a flexible schedule, and she works to make time available wherever she can, whether it is opening for students as soon as they come in, or staying late, and/or letting them come during their lunchtime.

Ms. D’s definition of a successful school year is one where she has been able to attend library conferences and professional development sessions that directly impact her instruction of students. She would also see media skills getting stronger in a majority of her students. She shared with me that MaryJo Richmond told the librarians that if the library looks the same as it did 5 years ago and if it looks the same in the next 5 years, then it is time to quit. To that end, she has worked to make changes to increase usability and to make it a place where students want to
come. She has genrefied the fiction books, along with changing their location to allow for better access. She has added eBooks and databases as well.

I asked Ms. D what are the priority issues, projects, and programs that would benefit from working on collaboratively. She shared that Makerspaces are huge, 1-1 and instructional technology, eBooks and electronic collections. These all tie in with updating the library for the 21st century.

Ms. D’s highest priority is to stay well versed in instructional technology, and keep the eBooks and electronic collections current, since every student at their school carries a Chromebook all day, and the 7th and 8th graders are allowed to take them home. It sometimes makes her feel like the library has gone to the side. FCPS is looking at the possibility of having Chromebooks for everyone by 2019, so this will continue to be an area of need, for everyone to work together to make the best use of the resources.

Ms. D’s other priority is to work on the environment of the library itself. The school was built in 1979, and has not been significantly remodeled since then. She would like to be able to replace old computers and old furniture, in order to make room for new tables, chairs, sofas and lounge areas to encourage collaboration, as well as comfortable places for reading, researching, and so forth.

The challenge in creating this type of environment stems in part from constraints that had been placed on the library budget. For several years, they were not allowed to buy furniture with the library budget. This has recently changed and
now they can use up to 25% of their budget on furniture. Ms. D’s principal has given her permission to do additional fundraising, as well, to help make it possible, sooner than later. Her principal would like to be able to highlight the space and also use it for meetings, which would have the benefit of making staff more aware of resources that are available.

I asked Ms. D about analyzing, reflecting, and implementing in the library and what recommendations that she would give to a librarian just getting started. She responded that getting to know your students and the collection are the essential starting points. Do not immediately get into weeding until you have a sense of what is liked and is being used. She had the experience of getting rid of the world almanacs for kids from 2010, and then had a teacher get mad that they were not available in 2015, when she went to use them for a project. This helps develop your focus of what should be on the priority list for purchase and what should be weeded. Once these other areas are in place, then look at whether the space needs to be updated and work on that.

Ms. D is a librarian who truly wants to connect students with books and resources that will enable them to develop a love of reading, as well as to succeed academically.

I had the opportunity to talk with Mr. H., the Assistant Principal, at Frederick Classical Charter School, where I currently work. We do not have a librarian at this time. We do have a group of parent volunteers who help to
coordinate book check-out. I talked with him about what would be helpful for our school at this point, even without a librarian. He brought up the point that we have several resources provided through the county that we are not making use of, which goes along with what MaryJo Richmond was also telling me. We talked about some of the reasons that this could be happening. It seems that many of our teachers and students may not be aware of the resources and/or how to use them. We also talked about ways to make it easier to access these resources. Mr. H is excited and in full support of my using this situation as a “case study” that could benefit from action research.

The issues that I think would benefit from this action research are as follows:

1. **Accessibility to Staff and Students-**Make the library resources more accessible and known. Currently, the process for getting to the library resources from our school website is very cumbersome. Would making this process less cumbersome increase usage of the resources? (Program Target)

2. **Collaboration-**Implementing a way to orient staff and students to the resources that are available and how to use them. This would be done through my giving a presentation to the staff and to the students. Would this help teachers be more willing to incorporate these tools? (Performance Target)
Notes from my Interview with Ms. D

Due to Schools being closed all week due to weather, and Ms.D being home with her son, we had to do this interview electronically.

Initial Question: Imagine it is the end of the next school year. The past year has been, without a doubt, the most satisfying of your entire career. You left school glowing with good feelings about your work, your profession, and about the impact your work is having on students. A close friend asks you to share what specifically occurred that made you feel this way, what do you reply?

- The opportunity to attend conferences and Professional Development Sessions that truly make an impact on my instruction with students
- A majority of my students made growth in their media skills

1. What are the priority issues, projects, and programs that we should be working on collaboratively?

- Makerspaces are huge
- 1-1 and instructional technology (every student having a Chromebook to use throughout the day, and 7th and 8th Graders being able to take them home as well
- eBooks and Electronic Collections
- Updating the Library for the 21st Century
2. Which of the listed issues, projects, or programs is the highest priority to you? Why?

- My school went 1-1 this year and the county is trying to go 1-1 by 2019
- Continually adding eBooks and Electronic Collections to keep up-to-date and meeting the needs of teachers and students
- Updating the library to be more useful in the 21st century-I have moved all the fiction and nonfiction, and I have genreferied the fiction to make it more accessible
- Getting new furniture that would better facilitate collaboration and use of 21st century tools, and making it a welcoming place that students and staff want to come use

3. If this succeeded with this endeavor, beyond our wildest expectations, what would the results look like?

- Being able to fundraise for furniture and other cool stuff
- The library would be a cool place to be, hopefully encouraging students to read more

4. In the past what factors, issues, or obstacles have gotten in the way of our achieving this extraordinary level of success (#3 above)?

- We were not allowed to buy furniture with our library budget for many years
  - We are now able to spend 25% and my principle is also on board with fundraising to keep the process moving to change the space
5. Have you “analyzed, reflected and implemented” in your position? How has it gone for you? What recommendations would you give to a librarian just getting started?

- Get to know your students and your collection-This is essential!
- Do not start weeding right away-Get a sense of what people like and use
- This will help you to focus on what to buy and what to get rid of
- Work on updating the space if it needs it, when the above areas are “under control”

Works Cited


Works Consulted
