


Chapter 3

Library Media Specialists’ Roles in the Implementation of Digital Tools, Applications, and Standards

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the benefits and synergies that the classroom teacher and the school library media specialist (LMS) experience when collaborating in the planning, differentiation, and assessment of content-area standards such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), with an emphasis on the role of technology and information literacy via Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards (DLCSS). General reasons for teacher/LMS collaboration, specific reasons for collaboration on the CCSS/DLCSS, technology integration, and physical space and instructional flexibility form the key concepts of discussion. Tables present specific CCSS, related to technology tools and digital literacy concepts, that the LMS is uniquely qualified to teach to students. The chapter concludes with practical recommendations for district personnel, school-based administrators, LMSs, classroom teachers, and preservice teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The classroom teacher has many roles: facilitator, manager, leader, guardian, psychologist, social worker, colleague, technologist, coach, student, and servant (Howard, 2015). It can be overwhelming to accomplish learning objectives with a group of children varying in ability, home support, native language, behavior, and motivation. Having more than 90 seconds to use the bathroom may constitute a given day’s major accomplishment. With additional mandates from administrators, boards of education, or accreditation bodies that technology must be integrated in the classroom and measured via Digital

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Literacy and Computer Science standards (DLCSS), classroom teachers may feel the urge to throw their hands in the air and declare defeat.

The classroom teacher, however, has a valuable ally, one that even may be underutilized. This supporter/co-teacher down the hall is the library media specialist (LMS). The LMS can help the classroom teacher implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and national or state-level DLCSS (e.g. ISTE Standards for Students, Alabama Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards) through methods such as co-teaching, technology implementation, and co-assessment (Bogel, 2009).

The objectives of this chapter are fourfold. First, current and preservice classroom teachers will learn general reasons to collaborate with the LMS, which include a reduction of the teacher-to-pupil ratio, more efficient differentiation of instruction, and easier cross-curricular integration. Second, collaboration as it pertains specifically to the CCSS and DLCSS will be examined. Teachers will discover how the LMS can teach certain CCSS strands and provide alignment with various information literacy and technology initiatives.

Next, the role of the LMS as technology integration facilitator will be explored. Preservice and current teachers will understand how the LMS can serve as a technology expert, teacher, troubleshooter, and manager; and act as an assessor of digital end products. Finally, the media center will be presented as a flexible space in terms of both physical plant and human resources. Authentic learning experiences, embedded instruction, and just-in-time teaching enable the classroom teacher to take full advantage of the library and the LMS's expertise. It is the author's hope that each preservice teacher, current classroom teacher, and administrator who reads this chapter will discover an innovative, exciting way to collaborate with the school LMS.

BACKGROUND

Various studies have documented the benefits of a fully-staffed, fully-stocked library, in which teachers, administrators, students, and parents work in partnership. Reading scores improve (Barack, 2012); math, science, history, and writing proficiencies increase (Dow, Lakin, & Court, 2012); minority students experience greater achievement (Nelson, 2010); and secondary students are more likely to graduate (Coker, 2015).

Research has indicated, however, that preservice classroom teachers receive little information about the role of the LMS, including how to initiate collaboration (or why one would want to collaborate in the first place) and how the LMS can help the classroom teacher with lesson planning, technology integration, and assessment (Latham, Gross, & Witte, 2013). Studies also show that preservice teachers struggle in the areas of digital and information literacy (Stockham & Collins, 2012), technology integration (Hofer & Grandgenett, 2012; Hutchison & Colwell, 2016), differentiation of instruction (Troxclair, 2013), and inter-disciplinary planning (Brand & Triplett, 2012).

Current classroom teachers and administrators may also not understand the benefits of collaboration with the LMS (Ballard & Fontichiaro, 2010). These individuals may not have had positive relationships with their own LMSs during their formative years, or perhaps they are unaware of the ways in which the LMS can help increase student achievement. The LMS wears many hats in a school, and the job is greatly shaped by the desires of local school administration. Below are several roles and functions of the LMS that can be symbiotic with and beneficial to the classroom teacher, particularly an individual in the early stages of his/her career.

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