

# Chapter 4

## Teaching Multiple Literacies through Collaboration

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### ABSTRACT

*Through collaboration, teacher librarians aid teachers in embedding multiple literacies skills across the curriculum. As school leaders and technological resources, teacher librarians have the necessary skills to teach digital, information, and media literacy to students. Collaboration enhances student achievement. Through a social constructivist platform, teachers and teacher librarians can teach the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills needed to prepare students for future employment.*

### COLLABORATION

Ash-Argyle and Shoham defined collaboration as a partnership "...based on shared goals, a shared vision, and a climate of trust and respect where each partner has a defined role [sharing] the leadership, risk, control and resources" (2012, p. 2). Through co-teaching, school librarians and teachers can provide their students with effective and engaging instruction in the multiple literacies that many of today's students prefer. Zmuda and Harada (2008) and Palfrey and Gasser (2008) emphasized the necessity of teaching students the information and digital literacies needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Together, school librarians and teachers contributed to their students' acquisition of these multiple literacies skills (Asselin & Doiron, 2008). The New London Group coined the term "multiliteracies" to describe literacy found

in popular mediums (Alvermann, 2009). These multiple literacies include information, digital, and print literacy. When school librarians and teachers collaborate, student learning and student achievement is enhanced.

### TECHNOLOGY AND MULTIPLE LITERACIES

Many of our students enter the classroom with skills in a variety of technologies, including on-line gaming, social media, and Internet searching. Although they may possess these skills, the pupils may not have the ability to use them effectively or discriminately (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Using Internet browsers (such as Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, or Apple's Safari), they often choose the first results offered by search engines

(such as Yahoo, Google, and Ask.com). Heider noted that the quantity of "...available information has grown at an exponential rate, making it impossible for educators to prepare students for the future without teaching them how to be effective information managers" (2009, p. 513). School librarians have the training to teach multiple literacy skills (Murray, Sheets, & Baldwin, 2009).

Moreillon argued that, through joint teaching, teachers and school librarians can provide "appropriately challenging and engaging learning experiences for students" (2009, p. 29). These experiences include teaching pupils the information literacy skills needed to locate, evaluate, and synthesize information across a variety of media (American Association of School Librarians, 2008, section 2.1). At the same time, the collaboration enables opportunities for the school librarians and teachers to develop and extend their teaching skills (Moreillon, 2009).

## **COLLABORATION IN ACTION**

Case studies of the past five years described how school librarians collaborated with other educators. The Idaho School Library Impact Study (2009) compared the major findings of 22 states and one Canadian province, and found improved student achievement when teacher librarians and teachers collaborated to design curricular goals. The study recommended co-teaching, as the students struggling to perform at grade level benefited the most from the support of the school librarians (2009, p. vi). Moreover, teachers who collaborated with their school librarians were "three times more likely to rate their literacy teaching as excellent" (The Idaho Commission for Libraries, 2011, p. 12). The School Library Impact Studies Project found collaboration between librarians and teachers positively associated with student performance (2011, p. 6). Through joint teaching, teachers and school librarians forged more effective teaching strategies.

When the social studies curriculum for grades k-12 was redesigned by the Board of Education, school librarians throughout the state of Washington united to provide assistance to other educators. They designed Web-based pathfinders to enable classroom teachers to access the resources they needed. A team of school librarians provided professional learning throughout the state to show educators how to use the available resources, and to emphasize the role of the school librarians in helping students with the research process (Mayer, 2010, p.42).

A case study by Hamilton described the collaboration of a school librarian and an English teacher who designed and co-taught a 10<sup>th</sup> grade honors literature and composition class. They utilized using an array of software tools to enable their students to create fresh "representations of information" (2012, p. 21). The students' benefits included the acquisition of information literacy and technology skills within a creative, content-rich environment.

In a case study by Tennant, Edwards & Miyamoto (2012), a student survey showed that the majority of the students preferred to collaborate in teams to produce alternative forms of assigned research papers. Together, the two librarians and the faculty member of the university designed a series of team projects. One project included library research to create poster sessions. All members of a team had to defend their research at their poster session. Exit interviews with the students revealed that they felt that they had a greater understanding of the teachings of the course and of the research that they had completed as teams.

Dotson & Grimes' case study explored the collaboration of teachers, school librarians, and community members to implement the North Carolina Graduation Project at a rural high school. Each student project an electronic portfolio, a research paper, a product related to the research paper, and a final presentation to a panel of judges. The study found the majority of the students felt their self-esteem, and their research, writing, and

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