Collaboration Between Teacher and Media Specialist:

A team sport that scores a perfect 10!

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GOLD/GALILEO Conference

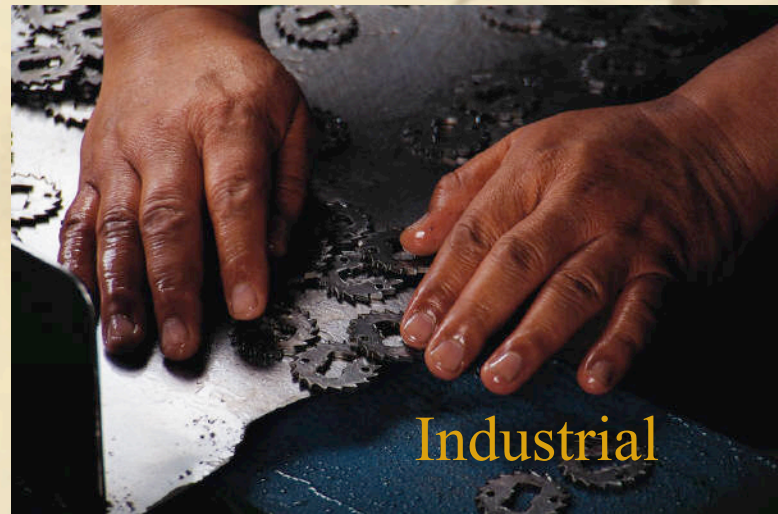**August, 2004**

Teamwork

Team Player

Collaboration

Buzz Words of the New Century

Our Changing Society

Agricultural

Industrial

Technological

Developing collaborative partnerships takes more than just offering your assistance

Why is it difficult to build this partnership?

Because we are educators, not advertising agents.

To encourage collaboration we must think like salespeople.

We must SELL our product.

Statistics on teacher/media specialist collaboration:

Of librarians who collaborate:

- Eleven percent say they <u>often</u> design and teach information literacy units with teachers,

- Fifty-one percent say they <u>sometimes</u> do,

- Thirty-five percent say they <u>rarely</u> do (Whelan, 2003).

Background of the Problem

Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a mome about it. (Milne, 1926, p.3)

Milne, 1926, p.2

Why should media specialists, teachers, and other educators collaborate?

Literature Review

- **Impact of school library media centers on academic achievement** (Dahlby, Eisenburg, Haack, Johnson, Valenza, & Wagman, 2003; Glick, 2001; Haycock, 2002; Lance, 1994; Smith, 2001).

- **Importance of perceived roles of the media specialist** (Dahlby, et al, 2003; Latrobe, 2001; McCracken, 2001)

- **Obstacles to forming instructional partnerships including lack of a common planning time, staffing, scheduling, constraints imposed by curriculum requirements and testing (**Carey, 1998; Haycock, 2002; Lance, 1994; McCracken, 2001; Shannon, 2001)

Significance of the Study

- For media specialists who seem to have a problem getting teachers to collaborate, there is very little research to offer strategies and skills media specialists can use to encourage collaboration.

Research Design Overview

- The purpose was to identify successful skills and strategies that nourish a culture of collaboration.

- The study was qualitative.

- The study was based on Interpretivism.

- Data was collected through interviews with media specialists and teachers.

- Triangulation methods were used to compare media specialists' perceptions with those of classroom teachers.

Setting of the Study

- Sixteen elementary schools within one Georgia school system were invited to participate.

- Eight schools were Title I. Two had won the Georgia School of Excellence Award.

- The lowest enrollment was 410 and the highest was near 800.

- Each school had one media specialist. All were female except two.

- Teachers were chosen by media specialists because of their willingness to collaborate.

Data Collection Procedures

- Participants were contacted through inter-school mail delivery and consent forms were signed.

- Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

- Interviews were used to collect data to answer four research questions.

Research Questions

- What do media specialists perceive as being the level of collaboration they engage in most often?

- What do media specialists perceive as being the quality most needed to promote collaboration?

- Do media specialists see a correlation between collaboration with the classroom teacher and implementation of highly effective strategies for integrating information literacy skills into content areas?

- What do teachers perceive as being the most important quality needed to promote collaboration?

Collaboration Levels

- Lowest level: Cooperation

- The lesson is generally about how to use media center resources.

- The teacher "cooperates" with the media specialist who teaches the lesson because the media specialist thinks it is important.

Collaboration Levels

- Average Level: Coordination

- The teacher coordinates with the media specialists to teach a lesson but the teacher has very little interaction with the students during the lesson.

- There are no follow-up activities related to what the students are studying in the classroom.

Collaboration Levels

- Highest Level: Collaboration

- Lessons are instigated by the teacher or media specialist who has skills in mind that are needed by the students in order to complete a project that is content related.

- The teacher shares in the presentation of the lesson, and the students have a product they are required to construct using their newly acquired knowledge.

Data Analysis Procedure
(What I did not do)

- Data was not used to identify and classify media specialists into levels.

- This study was not a study to try to provide strategies so that all collaboration can become higher level collaboration.

- It was understood that media specialists will have occasions to engage in all levels of collaboration.

Data Analysis Procedure
(What I did do)

- I tried to determine if there was a correlation between higher level constructivist activities and higher level collaboration.

- I tried to determine how often the higher level of collaboration occurred and what strategy or technique precipitated the collaboration.

- I searched for patterns which supported successful collaboration.

Data Analysis Procedure

- Data collecting began in January, 2004.

- Out of sixteen elementary schools invited to participate, seven consented, one declined for personal reasons, and eight failed to respond to the invitation.

- Interview questions were sent to the media specialists and teachers two weeks prior to their interviews so they could personally reflect on their roles in the collaboration process and prepare their answers.

- The interviews were semi-structured.

Data Analysis Procedure

- Transcripts of recorded interviews were carefully reviewed, using a descriptive analysis method.

- Key issues and recurring events were used as focus categories.

- Certain commonalities began to develop, allowing conclusions to be drawn about skills and strategies that nourish a culture of collaboration.

- Triangulating the data obtained from both teacher and media specialist perceptions provided a clear understanding of the most effective strategies to nourish these instructional partnerships.

Ethics

- IRB approval
- Consent forms from all participants
- Confidentiality ensured

Believability of the data

- The findings in this research indicate the same obstacles to collaboration that have been found in other research studies conducted in public schools across the United States.

- The ideas expressed by teachers that would make them more willing to collaborate with media specialists are consistent with the ideas expressed by media specialists who are successful in encouraging teachers to collaborate.

Limitations of the study

- Data was gathered during a three month period and there was no time for follow-up interviews.

- The study was limited to one school system on the elementary level in one geographical region.

- Not all of the elementary schools chose to participate.

- The findings could be subject to additional interpretations.

Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Media Specialists

- Planning with most teachers was on the coordination level.

- True collaborative planning was something they all desired but in actuality was engaged in infrequently.

- Most media specialists who were successful at collaboration attributed their success to being proactive.

- Higher level collaboration is not always necessary to implement effective lessons integrated with classroom units.

Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Media Specialists

- It was seen as important to not make assumptions about what each of the participants in collaboration will do.

- Successful collaboration usually had a "snowballing" effect.

- Getting kids involved in finding and using resources to create knowledge, takes a long, long time to design, implement, reflect, and polish.

- Teachers should be evaluated on collaboration the same as media specialists.

Results and Discussion
Perceptions of Teachers

- They want their students involved in literacy skills as often as possible.

- They think the lessons are most effective when they are designed and taught together and are coordinated with what the students are studying in the classroom.

- The main limiting factor was being uncertain of what media specialists are willing to do.

Results and Discussion
Perceptions of Teachers

- As one teacher pointed out, "A yearly orientation type meeting is needed even for the veteran teachers. It is a time for them to get acquainted with new resources or just get refreshed because we forget."

Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Teachers

- Another teacher explained, "Just get the word out because if you don't, it is assumed that you don't want to do that [collaborate]. Let teachers know what you desire to happen, what kind of collaboration is wanted."

Results and Discussion

Perception of teachers

- A suggestion for stopping the collaboration breakdown was for media specialists to be very organized with their time.

Results and Discussion

Perception of teachers

- As one teacher put it, "Teachers are kind of frantic organizing their own classrooms, planning with grade levels and other teachers who may come into their classrooms such as teachers from the Education Intervention Program, and other Special Education teachers. We have to plan with them and lots of times the media specialist just gets pushed aside because that's just another person we have to plan with."

Results and Discussion
Perceptions of Teachers

- EVERY classroom teacher participant expressed the importance of media specialists being specific in what they are willing to do.

Why do teachers want media specialists to be specific?

- Some teachers are afraid of imposing on the media specialist. They are afraid they may be asking for something that is not part of the media specialist's duties.

Why do teachers want media specialists to be specific?

- "I think the media specialist should say how she likes certain things done because we don't know…Everybody assumes that everybody knows what you [the media specialists] are supposed to be able to do and what resources you have to offer but everybody doesn't know." (Third grade teacher)

Why do teachers want media specialists to be specific?

- "Teachers don't want to be caught in a situation where they expect something that media specialists really are not prepared to provide." (Fifth grade teacher)

Why do teachers want media specialists to be specific?

- Teachers are able to keep a sense of control when they know specifically what kinds of things can be done jointly. These teachers are more approachable and more willing to approach the media specialist when they know ahead of time what they can expect.

Why do teachers want media specialists to be specific?

- As one teacher put it, "I am lost in my own world. I have to teach this and I want to teach it at this level, and I want to get these results. We need to be reminded that the media specialist is there to help. We need to be reminded constantly. Give specifics that I may not be thinking about."

Why do teachers want media specialists to be specific?

- Teachers expressed a wariness of involving the media specialist in teaching their class if the teaching style of the media specialist is unknown. "There is too much accountability and too much information to cover to get involved with a media specialist who wants to help but hasn't been specific in what kind of help is being offered." (Fifth grade teacher)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Commonalities revealed through Triangulation

- Both media specialists and classroom teachers felt collaboration is a most effective means of teaching information literacy.

- The interviews with both teachers and media specialists suggest that general invitational statements made at faculty meetings do not work well because one can not be specific enough when talking to a large and varied group.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Commonalities revealed through Triangulation

- Media specialists must be well organized. When media specialists attend grade level meetings, lengthy, rambling, non-specific invitations seem empty and insincere.

- Frustrations can be avoided and collaboration is encouraged when both parties know what is expected of them.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Commonalities revealed through Triangulation

- Principals are in a position to encourage collaboration and instructional partnerships through yearly evaluations.

- Instructional partnerships can and should include all parties involved in the educational process.

Recommendations for future studies

- Future studies that include teacher perceptions of any aspect of the media program should prove beneficial because they are the ones to whom our services are provided. They are our reason for being.

Recommendations for future studies

- More research needs to be done on how to overcome obstacles to collaborative planning.
- A most interesting aspect of this would be to investigate what effect on student achievement would an increase in media center personnel make.
- Future studies that provide specific examples of collaborative projects would be very beneficial.

Summary

- Other research studies have shown that building instructional partnerships through collaboration can have a positive affect on student achievement.

- Knowing skills and strategies that nourish a culture of collaboration will improve instructional partnerships.

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The End

Part II What Does it Take to Make the Sale?

- 1. Know the curriculum and know when the units are being taught

- 2. Study Performance Standards

- 3. Ask to see text books

- 4. Plan an activity involving media center resources and literacy skills

- 5. Offer your plan

Example

Habitats

Name _____

1. Animal   _____

2. I live in the : forest   rainforest

                     tundra   desert   _____

3. I am a :   herbivore (plant eating)

                     carnivore (meat eating)

                     omnivore (plant & meat eating)   _____

4. My body is covered with:

                     fur   skin

                     feathers   scales

                     exoskeleton   shell   _____

5. I have: 2 legs   6 legs   No legs

                     4 legs   8 legs   _____

6. I get around my surroundings by:

                     flying   slithering

                     walking   hopping

7. I am a: mammal   bird

                     reptile   fish   _____

8. This is an interesting fact about me:

_____

_____

Resource

WOLVES

Example

Habitats

Name Joseph

1. Animal   page 644   Arctic tern

2. I live in the : forest   rainforest   cold, little
   (tundra)   desert   of trees

3. I am a :   herbivore (plant eating)
   (carnivore) (meat eating)   fish
   omnivore (plant & meat eating)

4. My body is covered with:
   fur   skin
   (feathers)   scales   feathers
   exoskeleton   shell

5. I have: (2 legs)   6 legs   No legs   2 legs
              4 legs   8 legs

6. I get around my surroundings by:
   (flying)   slithering
   walking   hopping

7. I am a: mammal   (bird)   bird
              reptile   fish

8. This is an interesting fact about me:
   As young terns grow, they are fed larger
   and bigger fish.

The Arctic Tern is a bird that lives in the tundra. The tundra is a very cold place ✗ that has very few trees. **1st page**

The Arctic Tern has two legs. It gets around by flying. It's body is covered with feathers. **2nd page**

The Arctic Tern likes to eat meat. It eats meat because it is a carnivore. The Arctic Tern loves to eat fish. **3rd page**

facts

4th page

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