
The Shifting sands of School Libraries: Sustaining the Next Gen School Libraries

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This paper reports on selected findings from the Phase 2 New Jersey School Library research study “One Common Goal: Student Learning” completed in 2011 that provides insights into the future of school libraries, and their evolution and transformation in the digital age. The study examines a selected sample of effective school libraries in New Jersey to establish the key inputs (both library and school-wide inputs) that enable these effective school libraries to thrive, contribute richly to the learning agendas of the schools, and to continually be developed and improved in their schools. The findings are selected through the lens school effectiveness and school improvement literature, and identify dimensions of school library practice that have contributed to their sustainability and continuous improvement. Key dimensions include a substantive instructional role of the school librarians, an inquiry-centered pedagogy, a collaborative school culture of distributed leadership, a knowledge-outcomes orientation of the school library, and school librarians as professional development leaders.

Introduction and Background

Two contemporary, albeit fundamental pressures provide the context for the research reported in this paper. First, within the broader educational discourse, there are ongoing questions about school effectiveness, with attention in particular being given to effective pedagogy, classroom climate, school culture, leadership and ethos, approaches to school improvement, and curriculum development for 21st century schools. Second, there are pervasive questions about the effectiveness and sustainability of school libraries, particularly in the context of the shifting sands of information technology, resources, and cost of infrastructure and personnel.

An extensive body of research literature on school effectiveness currently exists. Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) identify three major strands of this corpus of research: school effects research which examines the scientific properties of school effects to establish models of effective schools; effective schools research, which focuses on the process of

effective schooling and integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches; and school improvement research which focuses on examining the processes whereby schools can be changed through application of effectiveness models and strategies derived from research. Since the 1960s, this body of effectiveness research has become more sophisticated, moving from simplistic studies of inputs (such as school resources) and outputs (such as test scores), to making use of multi-layer approaches to uncovering the dynamics of effectiveness. In particular, Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) identify the importance of understanding school effectiveness in terms of what is happening in the classroom. They claim that many school improvement processes and programs to establish effectiveness neglect the primacy of instruction (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000, 47). Century & Levy (2002) in particular raise the key concern of how to sustain school wide reform and improvement in the wake of current economic downturns, which often results in intentionally removing longstanding components of schools that are resource and cost intensive, or allowing them to fade away. They argue that sustainability is not just maintaining a program, it is about enabling a program to adapt and evolve in the context of changing conditions and contexts, yet maintaining core beliefs and values and using them to guide adaptations to changes and pressures over time (Century & Levy, 2002, 2-3). In order to do this, they believe that it is important to identify those contextual conditions that influence the sustainability of programs, such as school culture, responsiveness of leadership to changing conditions, decision making structures, attention to core content standards and national curriculum developments, instructional practices and materials that nurture student learning, communication norms, accountability practices that monitor student learning (Century & Levy, 2002, 3-5).

Consistent with Century & Levy, and Teddlie & Reynolds, Shannon & Bylsma's analysis of more than 80 research reports and articles on school improvement (2004, 9-10) identified 13 themes or characteristics of improved school districts, clustered into four broad integrated and interrelated categories, as shown in Table 1:

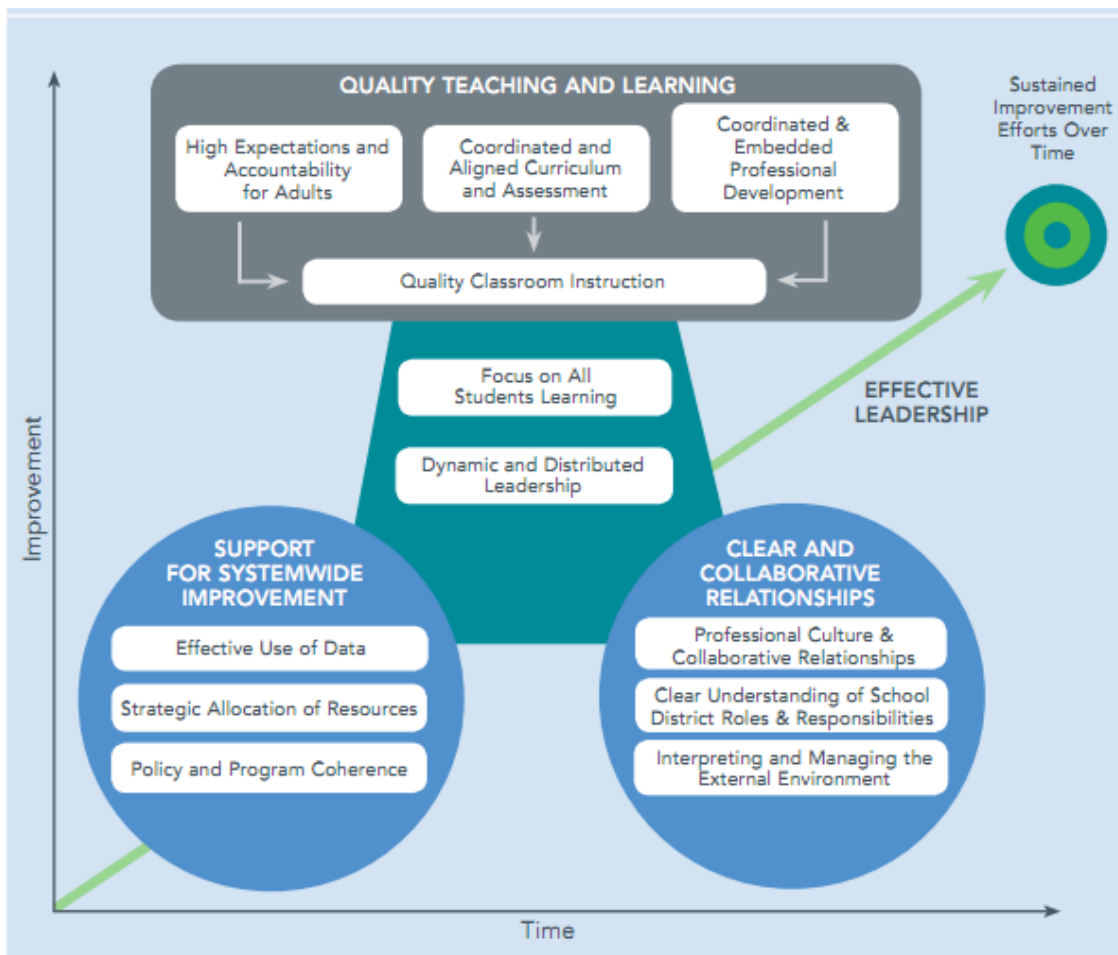
Table 1. *Dimensions of School Improvement*

Effective Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on all students learning • Dynamic and distributed leadership • Sustained improvement efforts over time 	Quality Teaching and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations and accountability for adults • Coordinated and aligned curriculum and assessment • Coordinated and embedded professional development • Quality classroom instruction
Support for Systemwide Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of data • Strategic allocation of resources • Policy and program coherence 	Clear and Collaborative Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional culture and collaborative relationships • Clear understanding of school and district roles and responsibilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting and managing the external environment
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They argue that “effective leadership that focuses on all students learning is at the core of improved school districts. Leadership is committed, persistent, proactive, and distributed through the system.” Such leaders are described as: “dynamic, united in purpose, involved, visible in schools, and interested in instruction. ... The ethical and moral nature of effective leadership is demonstrated when leaders move beyond talking about the belief that students can learn to taking concrete action to change instruction so students do learn” (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004, 1). They also posit that the essential dimension of quality teaching and learning embrace the twin goals of excellence and equity, high expectations for students: “The focus on all students learning to high standards requires quality teaching and learning” (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004, 4). Student learning is central to roles, budget, operating procedures, and personnel practices – student learning outcomes are central to the strategic allocation of resources to ensure quality instruction. An effective instructional environment is built on a professional culture of clear and collaborative relationships, and this culture of collaboration and wider school ownership of change initiatives sustain continuous improvement. The interconnections of these dimensions are shown in Figure 1 (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004, 10):

Figure 1. *Conceptual framework of School Improvement* (c.f. following page)



Against this backdrop, there are questions surrounding the sustainability of school libraries in many countries, as the information and technology landscape constantly shifts and changes. The American Library Association's "2011 State of America's Libraries Report" provides evidence that shows that library funding for certified school librarians and learning and reading resources has been substantially cut. Overall survey results show that school expenditures on information resources were approximately \$12,260 in 2010, compared to \$13,525 the previous year, a decrease of 9.4%. However, average spending on information resources in schools in high-poverty areas decreased 25%, or \$3,557, on average, compared to 2009 survey results. In addition, schools in high-poverty areas reported a 4 percent decrease in books, an 11% decrease in video materials and a 22% decrease in periodical subscriptions (ALA, 2011, 23). In the USA, and in some school districts, elementary school libraries have all but disappeared. For example, according to the California Department of Education statistics, approximately 24 percent of California schools have a credentialed teacher librarian on campus part time or longer; the majority of professional staffing is found at the high school level.

There are also fundamental questions being asked about their future in the increasingly digital information environment, the transformation of information provision and access through digital devices, and the increasing trend of mobile technology as the

dominant platform for accessing content. In addition, the shifting arena of content publishing and development of new delivery platforms such as ebooks and etexts, and apps-driven content delivery adds to the complexity of what constitutes an effective information environment in schools. Against this constantly shifting backdrop, are school libraries as we know them today necessary? If they have a future, what is their role? Should school libraries be sustained? As new technology frontiers for learning develop, such as the creation of virtual learning worlds; online schooling, virtual gaming and other innovative approaches, where do school libraries fit in? This paper is not about creating a model that will guarantee the sustainability of school libraries, rather it seeks to examine recent research on effective school libraries through the lens of sustainability and continuous improvement dimensions to identify directions that can enable practitioners and decision makers to continue to sustain and improve their school libraries.

The Research: Goals and Methodology

The New Jersey School Library study “One Common Goal: Student Learning” was undertaken by researchers in the Center for International scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) at Rutgers University in two phases from 2009 to 2011 (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2010; Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011). Phase 1 of the study sought to provide a comprehensive picture of the status of school libraries in New Jersey, including staffing, infrastructure, information technology, instructional collaborations, instruction, collections and budgets. In this phase, data were collected from 765 participants, predominantly certified school librarians in public schools, representing 30% of the school libraries in New Jersey. Collectively the findings from this phase showed that New Jersey school libraries and school librarians contribute in rich and diverse ways to the intellectual life of a school, and to the development of students who can function in a complex and increasingly digital information environment. The findings identified six key learning outcomes: Contribution to development of curriculum standards and contribution to test score achievement, mastery of a diverse range of information literacy competencies, development of research process and learning management competencies, development of thinking-based competencies in using information, development of positive and ethical values in relation to the use of information, and increased interest in reading increased participation in reading, the development of wider reading interests, becoming more discriminating readers.

The study also found that the instructional role of school librarians was a predominant characterization of the school library landscape in New Jersey. The large numbers of collaborations developing information literacy capabilities, as well as large numbers of cooperations and coordinations, show a strong level of engagement in teaching and learning. It found that on average, school librarians contributed 27 cooperations, 15 coordinations and 5 instructional collaborations with classroom teachers during the school year (2008-2009). (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2010, 104-105). The high levels of instructional collaborations were seen to be attributed to a number of factors:

- 84.5% of the sample were New Jersey state certified school librarians;
- On average, 52.5% of school libraries had some level of support staff working in the school library;
- High levels of interaction with classroom teachers at grade level meetings, team level meetings and department level meetings;
- Strong level of provision of professional development to the school community;
- Strong level of provision of information literacy instruction and a belief that this is best undertaken through collaborative partnerships with classroom teachers;
- Establishing strong communication channels in their schools, particularly with school principals and curriculum supervisors during the school year (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2010, 24-42).

In addition, responses of participants to open questions conveyed a sense of strong and active commitment and participation to a whole-school team approach that works toward meeting curriculum standards, engaging students, and helping them achieve academically. This commitment extends beyond the provision of library services to embrace and support all aspects of school life.

Building on Phase 1, the goal of Phase 2 of the New Jersey research was to examine the dynamics of a selected sample of effective school libraries to establish the outcomes and opportunities for school libraries in New Jersey, and to determine the key inputs (both library and school-wide inputs) that enable these effective school libraries to thrive, contribute richly to the learning agendas of the schools, and to continually developed and improved in their schools. The CISSL research team considered that it was important to document the perspectives, perceptions, attitudes and values of school administrators and classroom teachers, with particular emphasis on capturing the narrative stories of their use of and engagement with the school library that “tell it like it is”. Falling under the scholarly discourse of Narrative Intelligence, Mateas & Sengers (1999) claim that a growing number of fields ranging from history to psychology, education to social work, have embraced the use of stories and narrative forms as an effective methodology that is able to hone in on findings not possible through traditional methods in order to develop rich patterns of meaning and insights. Sandelowski (1991) and Atlee (2003) posit that the narrative nature of human beings has often been lost in the data-driven research environment, yet it is these narratives that convey the richness, depth and variation of experience, and through telling and selection, are given cohesion, meaning and direction. In this phase, we utilized focus groups as the primary approach to engaging with the school faculty and for the story-based data collection. As a well-established and credible qualitative approach to data collection, focus groups focus on interactions between participants, tend to gather “thick, rich data”, attempt to avoid pre-judgment and tend to get at more honest and in depth information and members of focus groups feel 'listened to', and this encourages depth and breadth of input. Through focus groups, we believed that these stories would give insights into:

- students using and learning through school libraries;
- faculty attitudes / values towards school libraries;
- faculty use of school libraries – enablers and inhibitors;

- faculty perception of impact on student learning, and sources of evidence of impact;
- school principal and administrator attitudes / values towards school libraries;
- school principal / administrator support for school libraries and how it is seen to impact on learning outcomes;
- Perspectives of the future of school libraries.

Twelve schools were selected to participate in this study. These schools were identified in Phase 1 of the research as engaging in multiple instructional collaborations with classroom teachers, and participants in these instructional collaborations formed the focus groups. Overall, data were collected from 97 participants; 49% were classroom teachers; 22% had school librarian positions (either full time or part time), and 29% had school or district administrative positions. 65% of the focus group participants were female, and 35% were male.

Findings

Libraries valued as part of the culture of a school

In the schools that we studied, it was clear that school libraries were valued as part of the culture of the school. School culture is typically defined as the school's shared beliefs, customs, and behaviors: the enacted shared beliefs and experiences of a school that gives a school its persona and sum up its educational success. For these schools, the school library was an important dimension of both the identity of the school and its operation, inextricably linked to the learning going on in the school and the learning success of the school. School libraries are "part of the way we do things here", as one principal claimed. The school library and the instructional leadership of the school librarian were part of the school's norm of continuous learning and school improvement, as well as playing a dynamic role in building collaborative and collegial relationships between staff members through sharing of information-learning expertise, ideas, problems and solutions – all working together to build a better school. Part of the positive school culture was the librarians engaged not only in direct curriculum instruction, but also providing strategic and cost-effective professional development for the school in terms of learning in information-age schools. The school libraries were centers of interaction, connection and collaboration, enabling teachers to improve their teaching are places where people interact around their craft; they improve their teaching. The centrality of the school library in the culture of the school is expressed by one principal who reported:

(School Principal) In the center part of our school upstairs is the library and the main office is the center part of the downstairs and I always say that downstairs is where we ruin school culture and upstairs is where we make it.

It was strongly acknowledged that the vision and leadership of school principals were important dynamics in the central role that a school library plays in a school. As two school principals said:

(School Principal) I understood that the media center in a library would be the center of any great high school. And any good high school would feed off of the energy of the media center. ... People have challenged me asking why we have two media specialists, these are tough budgetary times as you know. Our governor is challenging us daily to do more with less, and we can point to the evidence of continuing increasing in test scores, continuing increases in SAT scores, continuing increases in advance proficient ratings in our state mandated graduation test. These things are a direct reflection of the work our media specialists and our content specialists have done with our students on a daily basis.

(School Principal): It really comes down to the willingness of the media center teachers, or librarians, to embrace their role in school culture. ... I can only define it as kids love coming to our school and this is one of those components.

According to the participants, vision was part of the equation. The learning-centered work of the school librarian that enacted the vision played a significant part. It was the actions of the school librarians that confirmed the vision of the school:

(School Principal) A key component is having people and trust in their vision. ... They have a vision, we give them the tools and opportunities we can to live that vision out. Unfortunately there are mandates and budget constraints that make that hard to do, but its starts with having the right people in place and making sure we are hiring the right people who believe in the core values that we believe in running our school and having a vision and be willing to live and advocate for that vision.

The principal of this school explained that investing in school librarians has enabled that school to push learning boundaries:

(School Principal) They give us examples and I think it's trickled down to the teachers in that we are a school that takes risks as educators, we do a lot of interdisciplinary teaching between different subjects to see how one subject area kind of meshes with another. I think that our media specialists have enabled us to make that push to be better to take risk in the classroom, to things that are normally outside of the box. I think their willingness to help us on projects like that has helped us to collaborate with other teachers more than what most other schools do.

It was also clear that in these schools, school libraries existed within a culture of school wide support – belief in the vision of the school library, providing school library professionals with the freedom to enact their learning centered vision, and ongoing support from the school administration in budget allocations in particular. The school-wide culture of support is prized by both school librarians who are enabled to enact their vision, and by teachers who share in the learning vision. As one school librarian commented:

(School Librarian) I think the biggest, biggest, biggest thing – that allows the school library to reach its potential has to be administrative support and vision. It's got to be a priority. Because I understand that there are a million competing interests in a school district and if the administration doesn't recognize the importance to students learning of having strong school libraries – then those libraries are not going to exist. So for that reason. ...the definition of a good school administrator from the perspective of a school librarian, is someone who hires right person, gives them resources to do what they need to do, then gets out of the way and lets them do it.

This view was echoed by teachers who saw the leadership of the administration in supporting the library:

(English Teacher) I think this is a very supportive faculty staff and administration – obviously we're human beings and people have their have differences, but I think we present to the students a united front in what we value, and the library is high on list of things, including the love of reading, how reading can supplement education, but also reading for pleasure.

The teachers recognized that the school library was not an isolated, independent unit in the school – that a school library for a whole school has to be a whole school approach:

(Supervisor of Instruction) That's a structure the school provided and I think it should be stated. Providing a collaborative approach to running media center is critical piece to this design.

(Teacher) it's the support. We've talked about team since the first conversation today. It's all about the team.

The primary function of a school library and the role of the school librarian

From the perspective of the participants in this study, the school library functioned primarily as a pedagogical center for all faculty and students to nurture intellectual growth, pedagogical expertise, and core curriculum outcomes. Part of the cultural dynamics of these schools was the high expectation that school librarians were

primarily co-teachers who undertook a very active role in engaging in shared instruction. The library was viewed as a common instructional zone for the whole school, where students learn to learn through information, and led by professional school librarians who have specialist inquiry-based learning expertise. The overriding function, as conveyed by focus group participants, was instruction, not the provision of information, and the school librarian was portrayed primarily as a teacher:

(Director of Academic Services District Curriculum Supervisor) From a curriculum perspective, the library is the place where the curriculum gets implemented. And not just pieces of the curriculum but the whole curriculum. For me, [the school librarian's] ability to work with other teachers is very important for that. She's not seeing one part of the knowledge that we're trying to impart to students, she's seeing the whole picture and that allows her to bring language arts skills, to science skills to history, and so on makes it easier.

(English teacher) I really think that because the librarians are co-teachers for the most part. The kids get to see us working together with another adult. And I think that's really important. They get to learn how to collaborate, how to be curious and how to work through problems together. Maybe that's a hidden type of learning but I think that's one of the most valuable things that they get out of it is that they get to see us work together and model what we want them to be able to do in small groups and together as a class.

(School Principal) we're still in a time where we don't believe our information centers are as powerful as it is, as our educators believe. Our librarian is a powerful educator. Our information center is as good as the teaching that goes on there.

Inquiry-centered pedagogy

The school library was seen to contribute directly to quality teaching in schools through the provision of inquiry-based instruction and implemented through instructional teams. This inquiry-based instruction gave emphasis to intellectual agency for developing deep knowledge and understanding, rather than that of information collection and skills of finding information. Teachers freely spoke of learning in the school library as one of inquiry:

(Supervisor of Instruction) There's the idea such as media literacy, visual literacy, information literacy – it's all folded under the umbrella of 21st century inquiry skills ... and inquiry is the heart of our school.

(Language Arts Supervisor) So in terms of contributing to the learning process, the library does it, but on two different levels. In terms of content support, but also inquiry skills support. And sometimes those skills are sometimes more imperative than the content because they are lifelong skills that the teachers are supporting through their content as well.

(Supervisor of Instruction) So they model for teachers what is good practice and do the same for students. They model student-learning behaviors and inquiry processes. And they seem to be able to seamlessly do that, whether they're working with adults or students.

(English Teacher) They teach the students but then they are also a resource for the students that are learning an inquiry process that is very sophisticated and really asks a lot of them.

It is clear that not only students have been engaged in an inquiry-based approach through the school library, but teachers as well have honed their capacity of inquiry-based pedagogy:

(Science Teacher) Basically like guided inquiry on students, and teachers side as well – like they're guiding you along the way, and they're helping you breakdown preconceived notions of something you need to research. I think of the library here as a think tank ... That's true inquiry.

The staged process of inquiry-based learning was valued by classroom teachers. Students were not left to their own devices to undertake substantial research projects; rather, the inquiry-centered instruction provided jointly by collaborating teams was carefully planned and staged to take students through a research journey, and used to carefully diagnose particular learning needs to ensure successful research:

(Teacher) I would like to say the librarians do two things exceptionally well in process – [they] spend a considerable amount of time planning for teachers to understand the research process, and helping them align what part of research cycle or stage they might want to start with. So they model for teachers what is good practice of inquiry and do the same for students. They model student-learning behaviors. And they seem to be able to seamlessly do that, whether they're working with adults or students.

(Teacher) We really see the connection between what we're doing in our own classrooms to what we could possibly do here. It's a great experience for the students to not only learn how to research, and to learn how to explore and inquire through various media, but to have somebody else who is a support and a guide and a facilitator, besides the classroom teacher, ... that collaboration is highly effective. I look at that as one of the strengths of our current program.

Part of the inquiry-centered approach to learning through the school library is modeling the inquiry process with teachers – in essence, guided inquiry for teachers:

(Supervisor of Instruction) They spent a lot of time with us understanding the components of research. Within that they made sure we knew process but we knew the also tools and how to use that within context of any class that a teacher wanted to do research in. We can model effective research for the students.

According to these teachers, modeling the inquiry process has had powerful impacts on students:

(Social Studies Teacher) I also think they learn trial and error is okay. Kids want to learn “what do I do to get the answer to get it right?” But all the processes we go through especially with the copyright, with blogging. They learn this didn’t work out. Trying to get an audience in this way is not working. We have to go back to the drawing board...and that’s okay to go back to the drawing board. And they see the librarian model that every day. It affects them tremendously.

The focus on knowledge development

Instruction through the school library first and foremost sought to enable the development of core content curriculum standards. The development of a range of information process and research capabilities was a vehicle to content knowledge, and not an end in their own right, even though such capabilities were viewed as vitally important. Teachers across the discipline areas in these schools wanted their students to develop deep knowledge and understanding of curriculum content, and their collaborative instruction with school librarians served that goal.

(Supervisor of Instruction) I know from my administrative capacity I think one of the things we’re stressing is the idea of providing multiple pathways for learners to demonstrate understanding – opposed to traditional assessments methods of valuing memorization and recall – envisioning new ways learners can demonstrate their understanding. Can they put together a podcast, a multimedia presentation? Again, it’s just not putting something together because it looks pretty, but embedded within that are core principles that students are achieving.

(School Principal) I would start by saying that probably the greatest asset is that the librarians see themselves as co-teachers in every situation, instead of maybe what we always thought of as a traditional librarian. So I see that as our greatest strength. They are individuals who truly believe

that they are co-teachers with teachers. They are impacting a very specific type of knowledge that they want the students to come away with whether it's research or media literacy leading to content knowledge. They are approaching it from a teaching standpoint which has not always been my experience.

Because of the instructional emphasis on inquiry-based learning, some teachers and school librarians equated the instructional processes through the library as thinking processes – teaching students to go beyond the passive engagement with information and its superficial transportation into various products, and to be critical thinkers, reflectors and transformers of that information. The library was viewed, not so much as a place of information, but as a place of thinking and knowledge building:

(School Principal) This is such a place of seriousness and I think that the kids kind of treat it that way. When they're here, they act differently. They just seem to be more on their game, and it's all about academics and what they're learning from the educators that are teaching them here. They are learning to think through all of the information around them, develop their ideas. The main business in this library is thinking.

(Teacher) The library ... represents that thirst for knowledge –where students can go if they want more. I think not only physically is it that space, but also psychologically representing that to them, because our jobs is also to create a thirst of knowledge. ... Having that space for them is important for them, to go there, and to know that's there, and that someone will guide them through. And to point them in the direction they need to go.

The collaborative nature of teaching

In this study, a key criteria for selecting the schools was their high levels of instructional collaborations, where school librarians and classroom teachers have been involved in the joint planning, creation and implementation of instructional units targeted to meeting curriculum content standards. In this study, the collaborative nature of teaching emerged as the central dynamic of enabling the work of the school librarian to be integrated so widely and so deeply into the learning fabric of the school. Underpinning the notion of “team work” and “team player” is the mutuality of working towards one common goal – enabling core curriculum content standards, and this was clearly the case in these school libraries. The librarians were not running a “library program” as such, but working to meet core curriculum standards through the welding of professional strengths to provide the best learning opportunities for students, and where there was a sense of all members of the team moving in the one direction. This required considerable professional trust, negotiation, openness, sharing of viewpoints and opinions, and stepping outside of the box to engage in collaborative learning.

(English Teacher) And [the school librarian] will be in your classroom working with you as well. When we do our research paper with our juniors, the media specialist has come to my class, with my freshmen as well, multiple times and there is a skit we go through together as we are teaching plagiarism. And you know they have fantastic lesson plans, they are not just attached to the books, attached to the media center, they are all over the school and part of the team. That helps to lure the kids back here as well.

(Teacher) We have a nice teamwork approach. I have my strengths as a historian, [the librarian] has her strengths as a media specialist and we work really well together.

(History Teacher) the collaborative teaching role is key. ... They are helping you build your lesson, you're not just coming up here and saying here's what I want you guys to do. They are helping you build that lesson and working together with teaching it.

(School Principal): Where there's a strong co-teaching model, it's hard to know who the regular ed teacher, who the special ed teacher is, where one person's role ends and another person's role starts, and a really good co-teaching model there is joint ownership of the lessons, presentation, of the learning that goes on, not just for some of the students but for all of the students so I think what you see here is a true co-teaching model where there is teaming going on. So, what happens is, I think the librarians, challenge the teachers to step outside of their comfort zone because they step outside of their comfort zone. ...The librarians are not necessarily librarians they are media teachers. They're teachers first. And they're role is entirely different here than anywhere else I've ever been. Because they are part of the growth concept. And they have challenged themselves to be on the cutting edge of what's going on and what teachers need. So what they do is challenge themselves to go out and figure out how best to service what our needs are. And in order for them to do that, they have to listen very well, they have to be willing to get outside of their comfort zone and be educated, and then they work to integrate this through their teaching. ...I really think it's the collaborative atmosphere that really brings us together as school, and the library as we talked about, is the center of that.

Teachers believed very strongly that the collaborative team work with the school librarians had a significant impact on learning and teaching processes in the school, as well as learning outcomes of students. The school librarians played a key role in school-wide professional development, and this was seen to have a strong impact on the continuous improvement of teacher quality, and on student engagement with learning.

(Language Arts Teacher) The librarian encourages a collaborative spirit. ... I'm doing a blogging project in January and back in October the librarian spoke to me about collaborating with me and helping me teach the children how to use resources that frankly I wouldn't do as good of a job doing by myself.

(English Teacher) And that teaching the teachers, that has really been beyond books and research, really the tools that they have made available to teachers have made me a better teacher, have helped me to create more meaningful and efficient ways to assess the kids as well as to engage them. So it has made my classroom so much more diverse in terms of what teaching modalities as well as ways that they can demonstrate that they understand the content. They have given me so many tools for my tool box that have made me a better teacher.

Conclusion

The myriad of rich findings emerging out of this New Jersey study identify dimensions of school librarianship that are reflected in the body of literature on school effectiveness and sustainability. In these schools, there was a strong commitment to the sustainability of these school libraries – their staffing, their resourcing, and their curriculum-centered agendas. The dimensions of school library practice that have contributed to their sustainability and continuous improvement include a substantive and highly visible instructional role as co-teachers, an inquiry-centered pedagogy, a collaborative school culture of distributed leadership, a knowledge-outcomes orientation of the school library, and school librarians as professional development leaders. Collectively, these dimensions center on a pedagogical rather than an informational function of school libraries. The school library is positioned as a 21st century classroom that provides the information- and technology-rich learning environments that young people confront in the world in which they live. It is a place where school educators can collaborate and innovate, explore new technologies, learn new pedagogical approaches and co-teach with school librarians to develop information and thinking skills in print and digital environments. It supports investigation and experimentation with information and technology to foster quality teaching that empowers learning across the school. It is the hub of inquiry-based instruction to effectively utilize information in all its forms to develop deep knowledge of curriculum standards, and implemented through instructional teams. It is these characteristics that provide the essential building blocks for the next generation of school libraries.

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