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Enhancing Teaching and Learning

A Leadership Guide for School Librarians

THIRD EDITION

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This book updates and expands previous editions, but its overall purpose—to help school library professionals effect change in their library programs by integrating these programs into the school’s overall instructional plan—remains unchanged. Leadership requires a delicate balance between being simultaneously proactive and responsive. On the one hand, the library professional has an agenda for leading inquiry-based learning, advocating for reading, supporting professional principles of intellectual freedom and equity of access, and facilitating effective uses of information technologies. Advancement of this agenda demands leadership. On the other hand, that agenda can be fully accomplished only when it is integrated into the school culture and curriculum, and such integration requires collaboration between the library professional, school administrators, and the teaching staff. The result of the interaction between the library program and the other components of the students’ school experience is a synergy in which the effect is greater than the sum of the parts. These interactions serve to increase its impact on students. However, when the parts work in isolation, the potential for their effectiveness is diminished.
All professions have an inclination to become egocentric and to see their specialty as the center of the universe. In medicine, the primary care physician sees his or her role as central to patient care, while the surgeon sees himself or herself taking the lead in case decisions. In education, a school administrator is often perceived as the pivotal instructional leader of the school. Language arts and reading teachers are often seen as central to student success because reading and writing are foundations for success. The school librarian likes to perceive his or her program as central to education because it relates to all curricular areas and all grade levels in the school and therefore influences the school administration and the community. Yet, it is important for school librarians to consider respectfully the expertise of classroom teachers, the position of school administrators, and the beliefs and values of the community at large. Striking the balance between collaboration and leadership is a key to successful implementation of an effective library program. My hope is that this book helps its readers find the appropriate balance. Finding this middle ground means that the library program is at once affected by and affects its surroundings.

During my 13 years as a district-level library and technology coordinator, I observed a variety of implementations of the fundamental principles of effective school librarianship. No two schools in my district had identical library programs, yet each was effective in meeting local needs. There is not just one right way to carry out a successful library program. Certainly the school library profession has nonnegotiable elements: an inquiry curriculum; teachers and school librarians who collaborate; an adequate collection of resources to meet the needs of students and teachers; facilities that accommodate a variety of simultaneous activities; and students’ access to resources at their point of need. The school librarian must advocate for all of these. Yet the implementation in any given school must be adapted to suit the local school culture, which means that what works in a multiage, continuous-progress setting may not fit a more traditional school. Where to draw the line of acceptability is the key decision for library professionals.

This edition is expanded to reflect changes—professional, theoretical, legal, and political—in the library field and in education. As you read, you will encounter the role of standards; the influence of the media, including the web; the educational needs of millennials (those born since 1983); changing reading habits, including nonfiction, discussion groups, and reward-based reading programs; and so on. Scenarios for Discussion at the end of each
chapter are intended to provide opportunities to apply the ideas presented to practical challenges and situations that call for leadership.

This book is divided into two parts. Part I, “The Environment,” addresses the components of the school environment—the students, the content area curricula, the principal, the school district, the local community, and the library’s virtual environment.

Part II, “The School Library Program,” provides specific tactics for establishing the library program as an active player in teaching and learning. This section examines strategies for collaborating with teachers, policies and practices to maximize students’ access to physical and virtual resources, the important contributions of the library to literacy efforts, the unique characteristics of inquiry-based learning, the school library’s responsibilities for leadership in technology planning and implementation, student assessments, strategies for continuous improvement of the library program, and finally the importance of leadership. The overarching message of this book is that school librarians must overcome the lack of high expectations for them and their program through a proactive stance that is called leadership.
This book grew out of years of experience and study, both of which were influenced and aided by many people. Two important mentors for me have been David Loertscher and Al Azinger. David gave me a vision for school library programs and has continued to reinvent that vision as times and schools have changed. Al taught me the meaning of leadership.

The librarians in the Iowa City Community School District invested energy and talent to bring a vision to life in schools where they have made important differences in teaching and learning. I am especially grateful to Denise Rehmke, Cindy Kunde, Lynn Myers, Victoria Walton, Ann Holton, Anne Marie Kraus, Barbara Stein, Deb Dorzweiler, Mary Jo Langhorne, and Deb McAlister for their ideas.

This project required that someone believe that I had something to offer the profession. June Gross brainstormed with me, read versions of every chapter, and gave me advice. She helped ensure that the book reflected excellence in school library practice. Michaela Seeman did background research for me. Sherry Crow, Nancy Everhart, and Donna Shannon read all chapters and provided valuable feedback. Charles Harmon supported the work from beginning
to end. My family tolerated the imposition on their time for me to complete this work.

The text includes a quotation from Robert Reich: “Rarely do even Big Ideas emerge any longer from the solitary labors of genius.” This book, like the other work in my life, is the product of collaboration. The synergy that comes from many people sharing ideas and working together is what produced this book, and that is its topic as well.
PART I

The Environment
Students

This chapter:

- describes conditions of youth attending American schools and how school library programs can improve equity of opportunity;
- discusses the ever-growing demands for meeting the needs of exceptional students;
- describes the nature of motivation and its effect on learning;
- examines the importance of today’s students becoming lifelong learners and the role of the library program to support them; and
- identifies leadership strategies for working with students.

Students represent the diversity of our culture and are unique individuals. Denise is ambitious and hard-working, hopes to become an engineer, and is eager to please her teachers. Jana is popular and chatty, and wants to be liked. Kate is angry, outspoken, and sometimes hostile. Michael is on the quiet side, shy, tense, and anxious. John is bright, inquisitive, and success-oriented. And so it goes, with each student as individual as his or her name: Peter, Tom, Angelique, Joel, Manuel, Kerri, and Andrew.

A chapter about students is an appropriate beginning for a book about the school library program. While the library has many constituencies—teachers, parents, and the community at large—its primary goal is to help students become effective users of information. To accomplish that goal, the library program must be sensitive to young people’s cognitive and affective needs.

The relationship between adults and youth can be fragile. Power and authority, levels of self-confidence, and implied and explicit expectations complicate the relationship. An adult’s unintended cue can direct a less-than-confident student away from the library. Young people’s assumptions regarding authority figures or their desire for independence can prevent them from seeking help. Many students see the school librarian as different from
the teacher—perhaps less threatening. However, some may find the librarian more intimidating because they have relatively few interactions. Each interaction with a student determines whether that student will want to return to the library. An adage in business customer service says that dissatisfied customers often will not express their complaints—they will just never return. An encounter with a salesperson in a retail store will determine the likelihood that the customer will return. Effective customer relations requires understanding and appreciating the nature as well as the needs and wants of the customer. This chapter focuses on the most important library program customers—students.

Students entering school libraries seek help and resources for a variety of reasons, and each student brings a different level of confidence. They hope to find what they need and have access to friendly, knowledgeable, and sincere help. The library staff is in a unique position for building relationships with students. Teachers set expectations for student performance, and school librarians help students meet those expectations. Librarians can enjoy a special partnership with students. Those students who feel disenfranchised from the school culture may benefit particularly from the special nature of that relationship. The librarian shares the student goal of “getting the assignment done” or “finding the answer,” as compared to the teacher’s role of “giving the assignment” or “posing the question.” The librarian has an unusual opportunity to facilitate learning.

Conditions of American Youth

The conditions of American young people vary dramatically. In affluent families, children have their own computers, mobile phones, and other devices. Other students have none of these resources in their homes. In each school, considering students’ economic and family conditions is a first step toward being responsive to their needs. Often such data on economic and family conditions of students are available at the state department of education website. It is also helpful to understand the conditions of young people in the nation; this knowledge helps educators relate the condition of local youth to others. Schools tend to be insular, but in many situations student conditions are transient.
Poverty
In 2011, over 15 million American children were living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level of $22,050 per year for a family of four, according to the National Center for Children in Poverty (Wight, Chau, and Aratani, 2011). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2009 high school data indicated the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds who have earned a high school diploma or an equivalent credential. The overall completion rate was 91.9 percent and varied significantly by racial group—96.6 percent for Asians, 94.8 percent for whites, 90.7 percent for blacks, 82.4 percent for Hispanics, and 86.8 percent for Native Americans (NCES, 2011). Among various reports that provide evidence of the relationship between poverty and student achievement, the NCES 2010 Condition of Education report stated that approximately 68 percent of twelfth-graders in high-poverty schools and 91 percent of twelfth-graders in low-poverty schools graduated with a diploma (NCES, 2010a). High-poverty schools are those where more than 76 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch programs, and low-poverty schools are those where fewer than 25 percent of students are eligible. These data reveal that significant poverty and racial factors create differences in degrees of success among students. While school librarians, like all educators, have concerns about young people, the realities of some of these students lie beyond the library program. Still, the library program can try to encourage a student to stay in school. Sometimes, a library can be a haven for the student who feels disenfranchised elsewhere in school.

Language
NCES data for 2009 revealed that 21 percent of students spoke a language other than English at home (NCES, 2010b). Immigrant children newly arriving in the United States do not all face the same issues. Some face language barriers, some face poverty, and others are affected emotionally or psychologically by their life experiences. For a large proportion of them, English language acquisition is an immediate challenge. Their potential to acquire English language skills depends on a variety of factors, such as age, length of time in this country, socioeconomic status, parental education, and residence location (Rong and Preissle, 1998). Some of these students arrive here having been first-hand witnesses to the horrors of war and other inhumanities. The learning
challenges for these children are intensified by the emotional complications their experiences may have created. Some have left family behind and may no longer have an adequate social network to support them. These added emotional and social circumstances hinder their attempts to learn a new language. The school librarian may be in a particularly strong position to offer consolation and support to these students. In a 2009 survey of school librarians, 36 percent reported they used no special strategies to serve their English language learner (ELL) student populations (AASL, 2009). This situation seems at the least unfortunate and at the worst a dismissal of the ALA Library Bill of Rights, which ensures access to resources and services for all users. Adams (2010) suggests that school libraries have the opportunity to assist newly immigrated children in a variety of ways, including providing resources in native languages, learning to welcome students in their native languages, and reaching out to students through ELL classes and teachers.

Exceptional Learners
NCES data for 2008–2009 indicated that 13.2 percent of public school students received services from federally funded special education programs (NCES, 2010b). The landmark Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 stipulates that differently abled students are entitled to participation and progress within the general education curriculum (Yell and Shriner, 1997). With IDEA came a call for alternative media for both accessing information and communicating information (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, and Jackson, 2002). These alternatives create an essential role for school librarians to provide resources, to make available assistive software and hardware for improving visual or auditory access to information, and to recommend and teach a variety of Web 2.0 communication tools (e.g., graphic organizing tools like Bubbl.us or Kidspiration and speech-text tools like Write:OutLoud or WordQ) to assist these learners (Smith and Okolo, 2010).

In addition to resources, physical access is an important consideration in the library. Examples include workstations and space between shelving ranges that accommodate wheelchairs, adjustments of screen displays to accommodate visual needs, and provision of audiobooks. School librarians can help special needs students become more confident and independent by helping them develop skills in accessing information in the library. Cooperation with public libraries provides an opportunity to acquaint these students with a resource that will be valuable to them beyond their school years (Murray, 2000).
Another group of exceptional learners deserving special consideration in the library are those students identified as gifted and talented. Research suggests that from 2000 to 2007 achievement for the highest performing students (as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress) stagnated, while the lowest performing students made significant gains (Duffett, Farkas, and Loveless, 2008). With regard to gifted learners and the impact of No Child Left Behind, Jolly and Makel (2010) cite various studies as they assert:

Research shows that gifted students learn differently than their classroom peers. These differences include being able to process more information over a shorter period of time, thinking in an abstract and complex manner, learning information the first time (making re-teaching and repetition unnecessary), liking and seeking intellectual challenge, and already knowing 50 to 60% of the curriculum at the beginning of the school year (Bleske-Rechek, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2004; Reis & Purcell, 1993; Rogers, 2004).

Jolly and Makel then question whether the effect on accountability under No Child Left Behind causes these students to be overlooked in the effort to bring all students to a minimum level of proficiency. Analyzing growth measures of student achievement in both reading and mathematics, Theaker and colleagues (2010) surmised that many high-achieving students struggle to maintain their elite performance over the years and often fail to improve their reading ability at the same rate as their average and below-average classmates. Their findings raise questions regarding how well schools have sustained attention to gifted learners under educational accountability policies of the past ten years. Clearly, the library program has potential to support gifted learners. Supporting gifted learners requires that the library be accessible to these students individually and for classes, that the library provide resources aimed to both pique and satisfy independent curiosity and exploration, and that the library program include teaching these exceptional students advanced information-seeking strategies. (Note: It is inaccurate to assume that just because these students are gifted, they already know how and where to search for authoritative information and how to evaluate it critically for bias, scope, purpose, and accuracy.) The library program can have an impact by improving access and helping increase opportunities for learning by considering level of difficulty and ethnic representation in collection development, by teaching information skills, by initiating participation of the library program.
in learning opportunities for gifted/talented programs and individual students, and by responding to the impact of out-of-school influences.

**Improving Access**

According to the report *America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2011* (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2011), more than 10 percent of children ages 9–11 are on their own after school, and over 35 percent of children ages 12–14 take care of themselves once they leave school each day. The gap between parents’ work schedules and their children’s school schedules can amount to 20–25 hours per week. In many settings, before- and after-school programs are sponsored by parent and community groups as well as school districts to keep children at school longer hours. The library ought to be accessible to children whenever they are at the school. This may require school librarians to give up some control of the facility. Providing some operations training to after-school program staff and having them run the center before and after school can extend access if library staff contracts would otherwise limit access. If there is no existing before- or after-school program, the librarian might advocate extending the library hours to accommodate children who have essentially no safe place to go otherwise.

While it is tempting to say that is not the responsibility of school librarians, children need a safe and productive way to use the hours from the end of the school day until the time their parents come home from work. Library resources offer opportunities for making those hours safe and productive. Collaboration with other community agencies, especially the public library, may pave the way for homework help or arts activities in the library media center as well. The library should no longer be seen as a facility that operates only during school hours from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

School libraries need to forge close alliances with local public libraries. Bringing public library staff to school library facilities for “rush hours” or adjusting the work hours of school library staff to include early morning, late afternoon, or early evening hours may be solutions. Online access assists those students who have computers at home. Neighborhood centers or other facilities where students can do homework also offer means for providing access to information resources with the cooperation of the school.
library program. Cooperative grant seeking may be a path to added resources to meet these needs.

The needs of secondary school students call for careful policy making for both school hours and after-school hours. Extended hours increase access for some secondary school students. However, in 2010 16 percent of high school students were working (Child Trends, 2011b). Open access to the library during the school day may be the only opportunity for these students because their jobs may fill their after-school hours. After-school time is also heavily booked for students involved in extracurricular activities such as music, drama, and athletics. For example, data from 2008 indicate that at least half of secondary school students are involved in school sports (Child Trends, 2011a).

Access to the library is a two-way concern. While the library must have an open-access policy, teachers must also have a policy of open access; that is, they must allow students to leave their classrooms and study halls to go to the library. Although it is common for high school teachers to allow students some time in class to work on assignments, it is sometimes difficult for students to move to the library to access resources or assistance they might need. Concerns for orderliness in the halls and accountability for students’ whereabouts can conflict with providing school-day open access. Solutions to that conflict require the systemic rethinking of teachers, administrators, and the school librarian. Librarians must advocate for open access and encourage school policies that facilitate it. As secondary schools investigate block scheduling or initiatives to expand the length of class periods, eliminate study halls, and make other modifications in the schedule, librarians must be alert and assertive in protecting student access to the library when they need it.

Access to the library can help alleviate concerns about equity among students in terms of computer use. NCES data indicate that the United States still experiences pronounced gaps in Internet use along several demographic lines (NCES, 2010a). Minorities are less connected than whites, and those with modest income and education are less wired than those with college educations and household incomes over $75,000. These differences in access at home underscore the role of the school—and especially the school—as a force for equity. Differences in access also serve as a stark reminder that not all schools can assume students will have high-speed Internet at home for completing schoolwork. A study by Celano and Neuman (2008) indicates that pointing those less privileged toward the public library may not be the
solution either. They reported seeing young children in low-income neighborhood libraries floundering in their attempts to use technology:

Left to their own devices, children from lower-income families will not use information sources in the same way as their middle class peers. Children in middle class neighborhoods are exposed to more print in books, use more educational applications on computers and get more support from adults. Low income children, often left on their own, read less and spend more time playing games, activities that limit their knowledge growth. (p. 262)

Such an assertion suggests that children in poverty need access not only to the resources but also to adults who can provide the support they may not receive in their families to take advantage of the resources provided. In an information-based environment—and that is what school is—both access and skill in using the computer as an information and communication tool are highly advantageous.

Disconcerting are the findings of a study of school libraries’ incidental closures for hours or days during the school year (Dickinson, Gavigan, and Pribesh, 2008). Findings in this study revealed a relationship between the poverty of the school and the numbers of days that students were unable to access the school library. The implication is that school libraries in the poorest schools are closed the most, thus denying access to marginalized children who have the greatest need for accessing resources. School libraries have the potential to bridge the achievement gap for these students by providing access to books and other resources. They can also bridge the digital divide by providing free access to computers and electronic information. Closing a school library has significant implications for these students, whereas students in wealthier schools may have multiple avenues to seek access to both print and electronic resources.

**Socioeconomic Status and Student Achievement**

The relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and student achievement is well documented. Some researchers have found that low SES negatively affects student achievement because of limited access to resources. For example, children’s initial reading competence is correlated with the home
literacy environment, including the number of books owned (Aikens and Barbarin, 2008). Parents from low-SES communities may be unable to afford resources such as books, computers, or tutors to create a positive literacy environment (Orr, 2003).

Pribesh and Gavigan (2009) undertook a study to examine whether school libraries are indeed leveling the playing field for students living in poverty. Their findings were disappointing in that school libraries that serve poor populations were found to be less well staffed, open fewer hours per week, and less well resourced than those serving middle income children. When children come from homes less likely to have learning resources or high-speed Internet access, the school library should be an opportunity for them to compensate. However, it appears that school librarians will need to advocate for these children and their needs. Yet, librarians cannot solve these problems alone. Social policy decisions create inequities—policies related to housing, school districting, busing, and employment. Nevertheless, school librarians who are aware of the needs of students in their own schools can seek opportunities to provide access to learning resources and can advocate for them at the local building level. One step is to know students and their needs.

**Millennials**

The students populating high schools today are members of the generation dubbed “millennials” by Neil Howe and William Strauss (2000). These authors have been profiling generations for a couple of decades, and the portrayal of the millennials is one of optimism and great promise. This generation has benefited from careful attentiveness by their parents. Attributes like confident, sheltered, pressured, achieving, and team-oriented fit the profile of the millennials. Howe and Strauss portray this as a generation that trusts authority more than recent generations. If this characterization is accurate, the value of libraries and information literacy should not be a difficult “sell.” School librarians may find that this generation of students will exhibit interest in developing lifelong learning skills that will help them succeed. Their academic ambition is likely to bring them to the library. It will be important to adopt positive assumptions about these students and create programming that feeds their academic appetites—book discussions, book talks, increasingly
sophisticated technologies, guest speakers, and opportunities for problem solving come to mind as possibilities that may suit this age group.

Prensky (2010) dubbed this generation “digital natives”—born and raised in a digitally connected world. Black (2010: 99) asserts that these digital natives approach learning as a “plug and play” experience. She describes today’s student body as:

- often unprepared for the level of work expected because it lacks basic quantitative and literacy skills;
- preferring collaborative to individual work;
- assertive and confident (perhaps more confident than competent);
- supported by “helicopter parents”; and
- dependent on technology as a tool for learning and socializing.

Kruger-Ross and Holcomb (2011: 4) remind us to be cautious about overgeneralizations concerning the technological adeptness of today’s students:

While it may seem that students already “get it,” it is also possible that this apparent technical expertise is actually just eagerness and a willingness to give the technology a try. Still others assume that because students can use the Internet, YouTube, and a cellular telephone, that they will automatically know how to properly format a Word document or cite a picture on a blog. Students need to learn how to appropriately and effectively use the technology that you use in the classroom. That learning can happen as a result of direct instruction, through group work, online tutorials and resources, or through any number of other avenues. It is vital that this learning takes place, regardless of the specific avenue.

The potential for a deepening digital divide between students immersed in their technology and those who lack access or skills signals the need for watchfulness and attention in school libraries and the larger school context. The enthusiasm for BYOD (bring your own device) approaches to technology in schools, wherein students bring their own tablets, cell phones, and other mobile devices, requires caution lest this practice also intensify the digital divide.
Media Influence

One pervasive source of information and entertainment is television—a significant influence on today’s students. According to a study conducted by Roberts and Foehr (2008), 68 percent of children ages 8–18 have televisions in their bedrooms. Even more sobering is the finding from a Common Sense Media (2011) study reporting that 42 percent of children under eight years old have a television in their bedroom. Roberts and Foehr report that young people spend an average of 5.48 hours per day with all media, including computers, video games, radio, and MP3 players. In at least two ways, time spent with potentially intellectually empty media can be detrimental, because it is time not spent doing something more intellectual like reading and may involve violence or misinformation or other content that may be inherently detrimental. In a review of the research on the relationship between television viewing and academic achievement over a 25-year period, Thompson and Austin (2003) surmised that:

- moderate levels of viewing are better than high levels or no viewing at all;
- the type of programming is more critical than the intrinsic qualities of the medium itself (i.e., informational versus noninformational);
- high informational viewing generally correlates positively with achievement, while low informational viewing correlates negatively;
- once IQ, SES, and other mediating factors are accounted for, the relationship between television viewing and academic achievement weakens; and
- it is not clear at this time whether negative television viewing causes or is caused by low levels of achievement.

The crux of the issue may be what programming children are watching and how it is used to advance learning. Television has valuable programming to offer. Concerns are often raised about how inappropriate televised material affects young minds. Heintz (1994) described an interesting study of teenagers having “massive” exposure (three hours per night for five consecutive nights)
to prime-time, sexually oriented programming. Such viewing was found to influence the moral judgment of 13- and 14-year-olds. Specifically, the teens who had been exposed to such programming in the experiment rated a series of sexual indiscretions and improprieties as “less bad” and described the victim as “less wronged” than did teens who had not seen the programs. The power of the medium is evident, but it needs to be channeled into productive uses, especially for youthful audiences. A more recent study reveals a statistically significant relationship in preschool children who watched violent content and verbal aggression (Daly and Perez, 2009). Overall, Murray (2008) asserts that the accumulation of research on the effect of TV violence on children leads to the inescapable conclusion that viewing media violence is related to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviors.

A significant body of research indicates that parents can influence the effects of television programming on their children by intervening or even by watching with them. Research (Abelman, 1984) suggests that parents can inoculate children against possible negative consequences and amplify positive effects in the following ways:

- Perceived reality. If parents explain the unreal nature of televised presentations, the effects should be minimized.
- Consequences. If parents associate consequences with acts portrayed on television, the impact of behaviors associated with positive consequences is strengthened, while acts associated with negative consequences should minimize their attraction.
- Motives. If parents interpret the reasons for an action as principled, more learning should occur.
- Evaluation. If parents express approval or disapproval, this should increase or decrease performance because it cues the child to parental attitudes.

Yet, even though parents can use television for teaching, research clearly indicates that few parents involve themselves in their children’s consumption of media. A 2010 study by Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts found that, for example, 66 percent of parents have rules about which shows eight- to ten-year-olds may watch, and 47 percent have rules about how much time those children may spend in front of the television. This suggests room for more parental intervention in many homes and may signal the need for schools to develop students’
skills as critical, thoughtful consumers of television. In most communities, instruction for media literacy exists only due to the energy and initiative of a single teacher, not because of a coordinated, community-wide programmatic plan of implementation. School librarians can be advocates for media literacy education. Developing critical viewing skills is parallel to developing critical reading skills; in this media age, such skills need to be taught with equal or greater emphasis. To begin, students need to be aware that media developers make many conscious decisions that will affect their audience’s perception and interpretation of a message. One analytical approach to media study is to apply a strategy referred to as MAPS (mode, audience, purpose, and situation) to the study of a film, television clip, or other mediated communication (Rodesiler, 2010):

- **Mode.** Speech, music, and pictures that involve attention to the details of style, tone, perspective, and other features such as nonverbal cues
- **Audience.** Identifying who the intended audience seems to be based on the mode as well as language, pacing, personalities featured, and other details
- **Purpose.** Determining whether the intent of the communication is to inform, persuade, influence, entertain, and so on
- **Situation.** Considering the context in which the communication was created and the situation in which it is shown

This example serves only to point out that media literacy is the intentional study of media to afford students the skills to assess messages with critical analysis of media technique. Often, producing media messages in a variety of formats is a teaching strategy that can help students experience the decision-making process of a producer so that as consumers of multimedia they develop sensitivity to the effects of those decisions on them as audience.

Besides television, other media constitute important intrusions on time for young people. Highly ranked among these would be video and computer games. While there has been considerable discussion about the effects of violence in video games, in a substantial meta-analysis of research on relationships between behavior and participation in violent video games, Anderson and colleagues (2010: 151) conclude that “exposure to violent video games is a causal risk factor for increased aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, and aggressive affect and for decreased empathy and prosocial behavior.” Yet,
Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts (2010) found that only 30 percent of parents of 8-to-18-year-olds set rules about what video games were allowed to be played. Hence, the impact of this activity raises concern about students as they participate in their learning and living communities.

In summary, many environmental conditions affect students. Educators cannot simply throw up their hands in dismay and say, “I can’t fix all that is wrong with society.” Granted that the library cannot resolve all the difficulties in young people’s lives, some actions may improve students’ opportunities to succeed. The hard task is determining what can be done within the school to address equity, attention, or involvement in learning. Advocacy and sensitivity are dispositions an effective school librarian can use to create a student-friendly environment, acquire materials that match students’ needs and interests, and attempt to increase opportunities for all students. Many factors have significant influence on students’ disposition toward school and learning. These factors intensify the need for educators to focus attention on motivating students to want to be learners. Understanding theory of motivation in the context of the lives of today’s students is exceedingly important in creating in all students a readiness to learn.

Motivation for Learning

Motivation Theory

A classic work in motivation is Maslow’s (1971) hierarchy of needs. He theorized that human needs fall into a hierarchy and that the higher needs arise only after lower needs have been met. At the lowest level are physical and organizational needs, the basic needs for security and survival. Above these basic needs are social needs, the need for esteem and for a sense of belonging. As social needs are met, intellectual needs such as the need for knowledge and understanding emerge. Above these are the aesthetic needs met by the appreciation for life’s order, beauty, and balance. At the top of Maslow’s hierarchy is self-actualization. He described the self-actualized person as one motivated by needs to be open, to love others and self, to act ethically, and to express autonomy and curiosity.

Students need approval, affiliation, and achievement. Some students are approval-dependent; they conform because they need the assurance from others that their performance is at an acceptable standard. Other students have
less need for approval and are motivated by their own need for achievement or affiliation. A corollary to the achievement need is the need to avoid failure. Motive will affect the risks one is willing to take; for example, often students who are driven by a fear of failure will be less willing to take risks, to try new strategies or tasks. Similarly, students high in the need for affiliation perform in ways that they perceive to be respected by their peers.

Individuals who generally attribute their successes and failures to their own behavior are said to have an internal locus of control, while those who generally attribute their success and failure to luck, task difficulty, or an action by others are said to have an external locus of control. Self-concept as a learner also appears to affect a student’s achievement motivation. The student with an internal locus of control for success and a positive self-concept as a learner (“I can succeed because I have the ability and I can exert the effort”) has a better chance for high achievement than the student with an external locus of control (“I can’t succeed because the teacher doesn’t like me”).

Extending beyond the concept of locus of control, self-determination theory contends that need for competence (to be effective), autonomy (to have choice and personal control), and relatedness (to feel connected) are essential to psychological growth and well-being (Arnone, Reynolds, and Marshall, 2009). These aspects provide a valuable set of directives for the school library program: to develop students’ competence, to provide opportunity to pursue questions of personal interest, and to create an environment that affords students a feeling of belonging.

**Motivation Strategies**

A substantial body of research exists related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the perception that one engages in an activity because it is rewarding or gratifying. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is the perception that one engages in an activity for some external reward (e.g., students read a set number of books to win a special prize, such as a pizza). The research literature contains more than 100 studies that conclude that extrinsic rewards are often ineffective, and in fact can be detrimental in the long run. In one typical experiment, Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett (1973) observed three- to five-year-old preschool children coloring with felt-tip markers. The researchers observed that the children enjoyed playing with the markers. Next they asked the children to draw with the markers. The researchers promised some children a “Good Player Award” for drawing pictures. Other
children drew pictures without the promise of a reward. Two weeks later, the researchers returned and observed the children’s inclination to draw with the markers. Those children who had been promised a reward spent only half as much time drawing as they had originally. Those who did not receive rewards showed no decline in interest. Many studies follow this pattern with similar outcomes—ultimately a decline in motivation to do the task is associated with external rewards.

The literature identifies three types of reward contingencies (Dickinson, 1989). Task-contingent rewards recognize participation; in the preschool coloring activity, for example, the children were rewarded just for participating in the task. Performance-contingent rewards are provided only when the student completes a task. In such studies, rewarded students were less inclined to perform the task later than were the students who had not been paid (Deci, 1971). Every parent who has paid a son or daughter for sidewalk shoveling knows how likely it is that sidewalk shoveling will be done voluntarily in the future. Success-contingent rewards are given for good performance. Dickinson (1989) maintains that extrinsic rewards can be effective when they are contingent upon successful performance and when the standard for success is attainable. Chance (1992) offers some suggestions for judicious use of rewards, and urges that educators remain aware that extrinsic rewards can have adverse effects on student motivation:

- When possible, avoid using rewards as incentives. For example, don’t say, “If you do X, I’ll give you Y.” Instead, ask the student to perform a task and then provide the reward for having completed it.
- Remember that what is an effective reward for one student may not work for another. Effective rewards are things that students seek—positive feedback, praise, approval, recognition; they relate to the needs of each student.
- Reward success and set standards so that success is within the student’s reach. To accommodate differences among students, reward improvement or progress.

DeCharms (1968) designed a program to change motivation in children from external to internal with favorable results in their achievement. The students learned their own strengths and weaknesses, chose realistic goals,
and assessed their own progress toward their goals. The program stressed personal responsibility. DeCharms reported that children in the study improved in both their achievement motivation and their actual achievement. In a follow-up study (DeCharms, 1970) found that the improvements had persisted and indicated that the participants showed evidence of being likely to graduate from high school.

Educators want students to believe that they have some internal control over their own prospects for success. What teachers and other school adults say and do influences the attribution patterns that students develop, and ultimately influences their achievement (Bal-Tar, Raviv, and Bal-Tar, 1982). One important aspect of DeCharms’s work was the effort to help students assess their own strengths; within the body of research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, many studies emphasize the difference that self-concept makes in motivation. Children with a high self-concept tend to attribute their success to their own ability and are less dependent on extrinsic motivation—they are self-rewarding (Ames, 1978).

Kohn (1993) has studied motivation extensively. He states that internalization of motivation is crucial to developing enduring habits and behaviors. To that end, he declares that extrinsic reward and punishment systems are counterproductive. In an interview he states:

In general, the more kids are induced to do something for a reward, whether tangible or verbal, the more you see a diminution of interest the next time they do it. That can be explained partly by the fact that praise, like other rewards, is ultimately an instrument of control, but also by the fact that if I praise or reward a student for doing something, the message the child infers is, “This must be something I wouldn’t want to do; otherwise, they wouldn’t have to bribe me to do it.” (Brandt, 1995: 15)

Kohn recommends, instead, three ways to motivate students. First he suggests that the work must interest students. He poses the question, “Has the child been given something to do worth learning?” His second recommendation has to do with the school community. Do students feel part of a safe environment in which they feel free to ask for help? Finally, he raises the issue of choice. He urges teachers to give students opportunities to choose what they will do, how, and with whom.
Curiosity
Libraries should stimulate, nourish, and satisfy students’ curiosities if they are indeed aiming to develop behaviors of lifelong learning. For how can self-activated learning—learning that will occur beyond school—occur without curiosity to initiate it? Carter (1999: 61) recalls the curiosity that young children bring to school as kindergarteners. She challenges educators to reflect on these questions:

Do I teach children to read so that they can test well? Or do I teach them to read so that they can have direct lines to the thoughts, hopes and dreams of thousands of writers? Do I teach children to write so that they can have a nice piece of writing in their portfolios for next year’s teacher? Or, do I teach them to write in order to help them sprout wings and access new avenues for self-expression? Question the reasons why you teach the things you teach.

According to Reio (2009), cognitive curiosity stimulates new information-seeking and exploratory behavior. This finding suggests that a key to engaging children with information seeking in the library is to raise curiosity. One strategy related to curiosity is to provide incomplete or contradictory information that compels the student to explore information resources. Another way to pique curiosity is to suggest topics for research that relate to students’ personal lives. Giving students choices in deciding what they will investigate also supports curiosity. The need for self-expression calls for students to have a variety of media available for projects and activities in response to assignments. Developing multimedia, designing print publications, or producing dramatic productions are examples of ways to build creativity into students’ work that will increase motivation with appeals to their desire to be original. Another strategy to respond to the need for creativity is to expand the audience for student work—use local cable television to send student work out into the local community, use the web as a publication forum, or identify interest groups or other classes within the school as audiences for student work.

In her study of intrinsic motivation in children, Crow (2009) identified factors that can support intrinsic motivation:

“Anchor relationships”—relationships with adults who show interest and provide support for information seeking. Such relationships can be with parents, teachers, or librarians. Crow reminds us of authors
who recall that it was a librarian who excited them about reading and exploring for information.

Mentoring—connecting children with experts or other people interested in the same questions

Point-of-passion experiences—seminal events that trigger a genuine focused interest

Her work offers suggestions for school librarians to consider how they might manufacture opportunities for such experiences or relationships to create intrinsic interest.

Given the research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, at the heart of the work of school librarians is nurturing curiosity so that students seek information and ideas from self-generated interests and questions. Today’s environment characterized by intense accountability challenges educators to adhere to the basic understanding that learning for life begins with intrinsic interest and motive to find out something, to solve a problem, or to make a decision. As librarians work with teachers to design library research projects and activities, creating a sense of purposefulness and wonder may result in a more intrinsically motivated student—and as a consequence, perhaps a more engaged and more successful student.

The Library as Learning Commons

What is a learning commons? Recall the notion of a commons—a central resource shared by all in a community or a virtual or physical place where community members come together to collaborate, find resources used by all in the community, and share their work with others. The atmosphere is one of busy productivity. In a learning commons, teacher, librarian, and student all engage actively in exploring resources to solve information problems. Frequent consultation, conversation, clarification, and brainstorming occur amid an environment that supports inquiry.

The library program can be a valuable asset to the teacher and everyone else in the school who is seeking to cultivate motivation through success, curiosity, originality, and relationships. As a learning commons, the library becomes the ideal space to pique and satisfy curiosity with its resources, to
Imagine . . .

A high school social studies teacher perceives the library as a learning commons for his American Studies classes. Students work as teams on a weeklong project in which they spend each class period in the library. Each team has responsibility for studying a dimension of American life in the 1920s (such as sports, politics, prohibition, entertainment, transportation, economics, or religion). The goal is to investigate and work as if each team were a department of a magazine staff. The final product will be an e-magazine that brings together the work of all teams. The library offers a collection of resources that will respond to these students’ needs, ensuring they will be successful in their search for information. They have access to the necessary resources for web publishing. The library staff provide the support to students as they work in this productive atmosphere. Curiosity is the key to this project; the students generate their own questions and have control over their work. The end product allows for originality as students design the magazine. They count on each other. The time the project takes allows group members to develop meaningful relationships and identify the substantive contributions that each member can make.

courage learning relationships with its ambiance, and to support creativity with its technology and expertise. Stedman and Carroll (2010) describe their implementation of such a philosophy around a case in point centering on a study of plant life. The learning commons at their school became something of a hands-on learning center with interactive displays and exhibits, a wiki space for participative learning, and a variety of available learning resources—physical, virtual, and human. High schools too can adopt a learning commons model. Cicchetti (2010) describes a metamorphosis of a traditional high school library to a learning commons. The transition called for reassessing staff positions to align responsibilities toward more teaching and more technology integration, reorganization and reduction of the print collection to afford more
“people space,” introduction of new technologies and opening up availability of social learning web resources, professional development for faculty to help them take advantage of the new potential, and outreach to teachers one-by-one with a library teaching agenda driven by the AASL (2007) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. Results of this transformation are evident in reported data on increased library use. While it is easy to emphasize the physical and technical aspects, the learning commons begins with dispositions that favor open exploration; deep investigation; collaborative learning in person and online; creative production; and standards of excellence.

Conclusion

Students are the ultimate customers for the school library. While collaboration with teachers, communication with parents, and support from administrators are all important for the library program, student learning is the bottom line. The fundamental principles of librarianship call for librarians to be advocates for the rights of learners to have access to information resources and to attain skills to be efficient and effective users of those resources. Attention to all kinds of learners is a hallmark of a school library program. School libraries have a role to play in leveling the playing field and improving equity of opportunity for all students. Ultimately, school libraries can be places for information quests that nurture dispositions of curiosity and encourage self-directed inquiry and learning.

Leadership Strategies

Teacher and Partner

Enlist at-risk students with the aptitude for technology as student aides.

Beyond providing access, teach students how to use electronic resources. For example, offer voluntary “short courses” outside the school day focusing on specific technology applications or coordinate with teachers to teach use of resources for specific assignments during class time.

Support teachers who engage their students in creative work—promote the center as a learning commons.
Information Specialist

Provide materials at various levels of difficulty to meet assignment demands, especially in core courses.

Cooperate with such agencies as neighborhood centers to seek funding for online access to school and public library resources.

Provide leisure reading, especially magazines, on topics of high interest—if necessary, seek local business funding to support subscriptions.

Provide Internet access with bookmarks or use LibGuides (www.springshare.com/libguides) for topics that match local students’ interests. In this way, students begin to explore how to locate and evaluate information about topics of personal interest to them.

Invite a public librarian to introduce ELL students to public library services and facilitate their obtaining library cards.

Maintain open hours in the library media center before and after school for students. This schedule may require adjusting work hours or seeking after-school volunteers.

Offer space to community groups who provide after-school tutoring.

Market resources at various levels and in languages appropriate to the student population to teachers so that students with special learning needs can access information with less frustration.

Program Administrator

Emphasize the importance of relevance as a motivational consideration for instruction in the library. Encourage teachers and administrators to schedule instruction accordingly.

Scenarios for Discussion

Scenario 1
Some students who attend an elementary school are living at a neighborhood shelter until their families find housing. The shelter is crowded, and little space is allocated for families. It proves difficult for many students to take

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care of their books or return them on time. Books frequently are lost. Often students’ families leave without notice, taking their books with them. Many overwhelming family issues present obstacles. The librarian wants to support students in developing an interest in reading, and he wants to help them develop responsibility for taking materials home, returning materials on time, and returning materials before moving. He is also committed to the value of helping them develop basic literacy skills of daily reading at home. He wants these children to have opportunities equal to those of the more privileged children in the school. How can he accomplish these goals?

Scenario 2
Jane Dillard is the school librarian in an elementary school where a behavior management system has been adopted so that students receive tickets when they are “caught behaving properly.” The principal encourages Jane to use tickets to reward students for being quiet in the library. Jane has two thoughts about this: [1] She is trying to create a learning commons environment in the library where students work collaboratively and wants to hear that productive buzz of activity that says minds are at work. Therefore, she is not seeking a “quiet” library. [2] She would rather have students experience the reward of seeing the outcome of their productive work than receiving tickets for their good work. What does she do? What does she say?

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