

Learning Log 3

Krista Belanger

In your own or imagined school context, discuss one factor that could foster collaboration and one barrier to collaboration. How could the school community work to overcome the barrier?

In any collaboration task, a factor that could foster collaboration is the culture of the school community. From my experience, developing a sense of comradeship, support, and respect is what sets the tone for the school community's culture. Previously, I taught in a public school in Manitoba, and there was no sense of support because the key players in the school were exclusive and held a different set of belief systems than others. When the school implemented a program called *The Leader in Me* (and became a *Seven Habits* school), a requirement of the program was to support one another and respect one another to work toward a common goal. Sometimes, bringing staff and the community together through a program can be what works. In my current school, we have an established sense of respect, support, and collaboration due to the nature of the school being an independent faith-based school.

One barrier to collaboration is simple: time. While many teachers are well-meaning, and may know what the Teacher Librarian is able to do to support them in their own work, there simply is no collaboration built into the school day unless administration schedules it. A few obvious ways of overcoming the barrier of time is for Teacher Librarians to promote themselves within the school by developing relationships with teachers to encourage teachers to see how they can be supported by the Teacher Librarian, to offering to take work off of the classroom

teacher's plate, and by being present at staff meetings, come in to work early and leave late. By a Teacher Librarian showing optimism, initiative, drive, and passion for their vocation, the Teacher Librarian can build a positive rapport with both students and staff. By the Teacher Librarian covering preparatory periods for classroom teachers, helping out with coaching and clubs, the Teacher Librarians name is likely heard throughout the school day, which reminds classroom teachers that the Teacher Librarian is there to help. In my opinion, a lot of what the Teacher Librarian has control over is how they manage themselves and their space, and they cannot force classroom teachers into collaboration. According to Elizabeth Akingbola, in an article she wrote about misinformation in the subject of Social Studies (specifically Africa), she wrote about how Teacher Librarians need to be the ones to "take the lead" (Collaboration between teachers and librarians, 2017, pg. 20). She wrote that "librarians must initiate the conversation with teachers to collaborate. To simply tell them "If you need anything, let me know" no longer suffices. School librarians must be active partners in the teaching and learning exchange. They must be knowledgeable of all content standards and be willing to attend team meetings, communicate electronically, and if necessary meet with colleagues after hours to create engaging and empowering lessons that will deepen critical thinking" (pg. 20). This approach to collaboration will help the classroom teacher in leading an inquiry project, allow the Teacher Librarian to better get to know the classroom teacher and the students outside of book exchanges or random trips to the school library learning commons to better serve them in the future.

Administration needs to build time into the schedule to allow for collaboration between classroom teachers and the Teacher Librarian. Administration can do this by hiring a floating

substitute teacher to come in and cover for classroom teachers while they meet with the Teacher Librarian to discuss how the Teacher Librarian can best support and serve the classroom teacher. Hiring a floating sub can provide the opportunity for the Teacher Librarian to meet with more than one teacher in a day, which would be the best use of everyone's time. In *Inquiry Through the Eyes of Classroom Teachers*, Stripling writes "By understanding inquiry from the teacher perspective, school librarians can integrate their services, resources, and teaching with classroom instruction more effectively" (2012, pg. 18). Often, how Teacher Librarians and classroom teachers conduct inquiry can be vastly different. The Teacher Librarian must be conscious of how a classroom teacher conducts inquiry in their classroom to best help them in their teaching. Spending valuable time with those classroom teachers can help the Teacher Librarian develop a plan of action. Again, Stripling addresses this in her article, "librarians must decide how to enhance the teacher's instruction and impact the learning without disrupting the teacher's preferred teaching style" (pg. 19). The purpose for any Teacher Librarian should be about making teaching and learning easier for the classroom teacher, not encroaching on what they have set up, as noted by Stripling, "If inquiry-based teaching is the model that teachers follow . . . then librarians must adapt their services to teachers and students in the classroom at the point of need" (pg. 20). In working with the classroom teacher and not running the inquiry project, the classroom teacher is more likely to reach out for help or assistance in the future.

Discuss how the integration or embrace of indigenous ways of knowing into teaching practice can enable learning to be accessible for all students.

Embracing Indigenous ways of knowing into teaching is an incredibly important practice many educators are taking on. A number of the considerations and changes educators are making are similar to the way that they have recently been leading in the classroom, but must be brought into the forefront of how they lead. According to *The Aboriginal Lens – Education for Reconciliation*, the document “is designed to help educators challenge the current, established systems of belief that support Eurocentric practices that have silenced other ways of knowing and being” (2017, pg. 2). The main considerations include: respect, relationship-building, relevance, responsibility, reciprocity, reconciliation, and resilience (pg. 2). Having taught in a school with a high Indigenous population, the ideas put forth in the document are highly important in framing education for our students of today. I believe that the approach as outlined in the document serves all students, not only our Indigenous students. Our students want to come to school to feel like it is a safe place where they can be their best selves. They also want to come into the building to feel as if they are respected and their ideas are listened to, valued, and validated. In *Learning and teaching together: weaving indigenous ways of knowing into education* (2016), Michele Tanaka writes “The wisdom keepers believed that each learner comes into this world gifted with unique abilities. Adults should never try to shape a child; instead, adults should watch children and wait to see who they are becoming . . . From this perspective the wisdom keepers recognize each learner’s potential, grounded in who the learner was what he or she knew; they did not rely on external sources, such as their own experience or public curriculum documents” (pg. 71). It can be humbling as a teacher or

Teacher Librarian to accept that the years of schooling we have gone through and life experience we may have should not impact how we interact with our students. Tanaka continues, “[this type of relationship] requires the teacher to be very open-minded about the possibilities of the learner in terms of what direction the learner might take, and what his or her needs might be” (pg. 71). In addition, it is important for the Teacher Librarian to be humble enough to accept that their vocation is about helping students learn, and is not a selfish vocation, as “teachers [must] ask themselves: ‘Is it my need that’s being filled, or is it the student’s need that’s being filled? You know, if we were a real educator, it [would be] the students’ needs that we are trying to fill and not ours and not the system’s’” (pg. 71).

Someone in a Teacher Librarian position is at a significant advantage to utilizing the framework, as often students come into the school library learning commons and have a different feeling than if they were in the classroom. A student may have had a particularly poor day in class, lost their homework, and maybe were sent out of the classroom. The school library learning commons becomes the place where none of that matters because the Teacher Librarian will likely not know what happened. The relationships built between Teacher Librarians and students in the school library learning commons are different than those developed in the classroom. In the classroom, students are constantly being held accountable and are likely being told the same things over and over again in all of their classes, but upon stepping into the school library learning commons, the baggage is dropped at the door. Therefore, it is up to the Teacher Librarian to be a positive, listening, and valuable resource in that students’ academic life as they may not experience positivity from other places in their school careers. According to the Aboriginal Lens document, “[reciprocity means] Eliminating

power differentials in decision-making; genuine cooperation can only take place where there is a meeting of equals” (pg. 2) which is often the case in the school library learning commons. It should not be the goal of the Teacher Librarian to hold all of the knowledge, it should be the goal of the Teacher Librarian to be on the same team as the student, to encourage them, to listen to their ideas, to validate their feelings, and to mentor them when possible.

References

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