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PRINCIPALS AND LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS WORKING TOGETHER: A CASE STUDY OF ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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CASE STUDY OF ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

Principals and Library Media Specialists Working Together: A Case Study of One Elementary School

Elementary school principals are busy people. They are torn away from instructional duties by daily emergencies and are challenged to track student achievement and plan for improvements. Library media specialists are in a position to help principals improve teaching and learning. Gaining a better understanding of a positive and productive working relationship between a principal and a library media specialist will give the field valuable insight into how present-day schools can meet the needs of instructional and administrative leadership.

This qualitative study examined the working relationship of an elementary school principal and library media specialist in a public school setting. The individual case study focused on how the principal utilized the library media specialist to improve learning and instruction and explored the relationship's effect on the school community. The library media program developed by the principal and librarian was chosen for its quality reputation. The program was deemed outstanding by Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Missouri Association of School Librarians (MASL). An understanding of the case was built by collecting and analyzing data from interviews, observations, and examination of relevant documents.

Results of the study led to these conclusions: the library was a welcoming place enjoyed by students, teachers, and community volunteers; teachers viewed the library media specialist as an instructional partner; the principal was knowledgeable about the

library media center expecting students and teachers to use the facility and resources in learning and instruction; the principal supported the library media program through the school budget, collaborative planning, and flexible scheduling; the librarian participated in building and district-wide professional development, served on curriculum and textbook committees, and took part in the school's technology team; and finally, the principal and library media specialist advocated collaboration impacted student achievement in a positive way.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Public school administrators are looking for leaders to direct initiatives such as technology, curriculum development, school improvement, and student achievement. Moreover, they must supervise fellow educators in these endeavors and do so with conviction and a positive attitude.

Who will accept this leadership challenge? Often, the building principal is named instructional leader. This is the person who determines whether or not curriculum, instruction, and technology initiatives improve the school (Krajewski & Dunklin, 2001). However, the principal has many responsibilities. Some of these crises "eat into time they would rather spend on education issues" (Johnson, 2004, p. 24).

An educator already established in the school community has the ability to assist the principal in the areas of learning and instruction. Teacher, instructional partner, information specialist—the library media specialist wears all of these hats. Furthermore, studies show that student achievement is directly related to quality library media programs (Lance, 1994, 2001; Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell, 2000). Library media specialists can help school administrators provide the best education possible for students. Job descriptions for librarians already promote this concept.

Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (School Library Media Standards Handbook, 2003) provides a job description for library media specialists. The librarian's role is divided into five areas: 1) administration, management and supervision; 2) planning, curriculum, and related responsibilities; 3) instruction; 4)

technology; and 5) professionalism. Library media specialists in Missouri must have knowledge and expertise in these areas in order to hold a position in the library.

Missouri's library media specialists are trained in teaching and learning processes. They are prepared to play a critical role in curriculum development, instructional strategies, and technology implementation. Today, library media specialists are part of the school community. They are available to take part in school improvement and assist building principals in learning initiatives.

However, library media specialists are sometimes overlooked when it comes to learning and instruction. Roberson, Applin, and Schweinle (2005) found that despite a positive library media program/student achievement correlation, principals do not utilize librarians for student learning. This is due largely to the fact that the library media program is not included in principal preparation classes.

Lance (American Library Association, 2006) states that the main reason for library program failure is lack of support from administrators, teachers, and technology staff. He further comments that school librarians must search for ways to motivate and include school personnel in developing successful library media programs.

What's more, there are negative perceptions of the library media program that must be conquered (Hartzell, 2002). Stereotypical images of libraries and librarians, the professional training of educators, and the nature of librarians' work all work against the view of librarians as collaborators and leaders. Lance (2006) lists three factors undermining successful school libraries: 1) age demographics of school librarians, 2) lack of permanency of librarianship in the school setting, and 3) lack of educator support because of little training about library services or negative experiences with librarians.

The purpose of my study was to examine a positive working relationship between an elementary school principal and the library media specialist. I wanted to know what this relationship looked like, what specific elements were present, and how it affected learning and instruction in the school environment. I wanted to tell the story of their relationship and the impact it had on teachers, students, and each other.

Statement of the Problem

Administrators are continually challenged to track student achievement and plan for improvements. Building principals wear many hats and are torn away from that of instructional leader by daily emergencies. Gaining a better understanding of a positive and productive working relationship between a principal and a library media specialist may give the field valuable insight into how present-day schools can meet the needs of instructional and administrative leadership.

Stephen Zsiray (2003) stated the "library media center is a training ground for school leadership because library media specialists see the big picture in school administration" (p. 14). Furthermore, "the experiences of the library media specialist and the building principal parallel each other in such tasks as curriculum understanding, service to clientele, and understanding of the importance of the school learning community" (Zsiray, 2003, p. 15).

Guiding Question and Sub Questions

The guiding question in this qualitative study was as follows: what does the school community look like when the principal and library media specialist have a positive working relationship? Sub questions were:

• What specific elements are present in the school library media program?

- How does the relationship affect learning and instruction?

Definitions

Education is filled with terminology unique to the field. Words and meanings that I take for granted may be unknown or misunderstood by those outside the public school setting. Therefore, I chose to define seven words and terms that appear frequently in this study. They were: 1) principal, 2) library media specialist, 3) school community, 4) leadership, 5) instructional leader, 6) student achievement, and 7) taxonomy. Hopefully, the following definitions helped readers understand these words and terms as they pertained to my study and setting.

Principal. According to The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 1996), a principal is the building administrator who promotes student success. To do this, the principal creates a vision of learning, promotes a school community conducive to teaching and learning, manages the operation of the environment, works with families and community members, acts with integrity and fairness, and works within the political and socio-economic culture of the community.

Vincent Ferrandino (2001) simplified ISLLC's list of standards. The principal is the person who stands up for important ideas and values, keeps sight of the school vision, and makes difficult day-to-day decisions.

Library media specialist. The library media specialist in the public school setting is a person who supports information and technology literacy throughout the curriculum. Presently, certification for library media specialists in Missouri requires a teaching certificate, two years of teaching experience, a minimum grade point average of 2.5, and completion of specific library science courses. The School Library Media Standards

Handbook (2003) published by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education lists suggested responsibilities to be fulfilled by the library media specialist. Some of these deal with finances, collaboration, and professional development.

The preferred term in the state as well as on the national level is library media specialist. However, librarian and teacher-librarian are also used in the literature and in the field. Therefore, all three terms were used interchangeably.

School community. Every school community is different and has its own needs and interests. Administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students, and the surrounding community make up the community. These individuals share experiences, set behavioral norms, and create a sense of belonging (Horan, 1999). Building relationships transforms this group into a school community. Their goal is helping students succeed.

Leadership. Leadership has been defined as simply as doing the right thing (Bennis, 1984) or working on the system (Covey, 2004). In education however, management is combined with leadership to define the supervisory role held by public school administrators, especially principals. This view of educational leadership is promoted by The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 1996).

There are a number of leadership styles that have become part of educational leadership. I reviewed some of these in Chapter 2. However, the definition remained broad for my study. This was because it did not become known until the end of the study what part leadership played in the principal/librarian relationship and what particular leadership styles were in place. Therefore, leadership in the context of this study means creating a climate of encouragement and flexibility while influencing and working with others for the good of the school community.

Instructional leader. Instructional leader is a term undergoing change. The principal as instructional leader was one who focused on curriculum and instruction in the 1980s. Principals were involved in setting goals, budgeting for resources, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers (Lashway, 2003). Since the 1990s, the focus is more learner-focused than teacher-focused.

Today, the principal leads teachers to meet state and national standards. This is accomplished by balancing directives and dialogue. Lashway (2003) published six roles of the principal as instructional leader developed by The National Association of Elementary School Principals. Among them are prioritizing student and adult learning, setting high expectations, and creating a culture of continuous learning.

Student achievement. Student achievement is a term tossed about in educational circles. It is used by many but may be clearly understood by few. Student achievement is access to learning opportunities which results in educational excellence for students.   How this occurs and what the results are differ from school to school and student to student.

Michelle Gamble-Risley (2006) pointed out responsibilities held by educators in the pursuit of student achievement. Teachers need to personalize instruction, evaluate student data, check progress, and collaborate with fellow educators to discuss strategies for improved student learning.

Ross Todd (2003) identified the students' responsibilities in achieving educational excellence. They need to examine their existing knowledge and determine what they still need to know. They need to know how to find that additional information. Finally, students must take ownership of their learning.

Taxonomy. According to Campbell and Currier (2000), a taxonomy is an ordered classification system. It should be consistent among user groups within a subject area. Therefore, using *The Taxonomies of a School Library Media Program* (Loertscher, 2002 and Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003) provided a common language for examining the positive working relationship between the principal and library media specialist in this study.

Campbell and Currier (2000) continued the discussion of taxonomies by stating they are used to classify, describe, and facilitate discussion. By using *The Principal's Organizational Taxonomy of the Library Media Program* (Loertscher, 2002 and Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003) and *The Library Media Specialist's Taxonomy* (Loertscher, 2002 and Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003), I had an accepted and standard language among educators with which to examine and discuss my case.

Delimitations and Limitations

I conducted my study in one elementary school within a large school district in Missouri. It took place within the 2006-2007 school year. It was meant to be a narrow rather than broad case study. This allowed my information to be both deep and rich. I chose this particular school for its exemplary standing within the state of Missouri as cited by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri Association of School Librarians. The principal and librarian were known for their positive working relationship and dedication to student success.

Limitations to my study were similar to the points that also set the boundaries. The focus was on one elementary school. This limited my study to one set of experiences

and perceptions. The demographics of this setting also limited my study. As a result, the application of the results may be limited. But the findings provided a starting point for understanding, discussion, and further study.

I also considered the fact that my professional background may limit my objectivity in this study. I served as both library media specialist and elementary school principal in the public school setting. I kept this fact in mind at all times to keep a balanced viewpoint.

My experience as librarian and principal also brought a unique quality to the study. Since I have been a librarian and a principal, I could look at the experiences of both participants in my study with a clearer understanding of what they were facing.

Significance of the Study

Using David Loertscher's *Taxonomies of the School Library Media Program* (Loertscher, 2002) as a conceptual framework, this study identified ways one elementary school principal utilized the library media specialist to advance and improve learning and instruction. Since Loertscher's taxonomies are part of Missouri's *School Library Media Standards Handbook (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003,* the framework was a fitting model for my case study.

The taxonomies allowed me to pinpoint specific elements present in this particular library media program. I was able to approach the case from the principal's point of view as well as the library media specialist's. They also served as building blocks upon which to build the foundation of my study. I started with state and nationally accepted guidelines and continued with the personal and specific experiences of my setting.

School communities are made up of various age groups, genders, academic abilities, and commitment levels. Individuals and groups within schools are tied together by relationships. Much has been written about school improvement and the part principals, teachers, and parents play in this improvement. I considered how these groups worked, learned, and related with each other in my setting.

Barth (1990) stated school improvements should begin with the interpersonal relationships of those in charge of the teaching and learning within the school building. He also noted it is difficult to identify a strong working relationship by visiting a school once or even twice. "We do not sense a robust sense of purpose and deep commitment without listening intently to conversation…" (p149-150).

This study is significant because I listened intently to the faculty, staff, and students who made up my case. I closely watched their school community and studied the results of their labor. As a result, my research told the story of a successful working relationship. Because the elementary school principal and library media specialist worked together to improve teaching and learning, students benefited. As previous research suggested (Lance, 2006), sharing their compelling success story could benefit educators.

Summary

Elementary school principals are busy people. Their responsibilities are varied. Library media specialists are in a position to help these instructional leaders improve teaching and learning. Gaining an understanding of a positive and productive working relationship between a principal and library media specialist may give the field valuable insight.

This is why I chose to examine a positive working relationship between an elementary school principal and library media specialist. I wanted to find out what made this relationship work. I examined the library media program and how it and the principal/library media specialist relationship affected learning, instruction, and the school community.

I conducted my research in an elementary school which was part of a large school district in Missouri. The case study was meant to be narrow allowing for rich, descriptive information to surface. Even though this may have limited the application of results, my findings provided a starting point for discussion and further study.

I used David Loertscher's *Taxonomies of the School Library Media Program* (Loertscher, 2002) as a conceptual framework. Studying my individual case in this context provided structure to my research acceptable in Missouri and the United States. Moreover, this study told an important story which could help us understand how positive working relationships benefit all members of the school community.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to look at ways one elementary school principal utilized the library media specialist in learning and instruction. I examined the literature to better understand this relationship. I reviewed literature about principals, library media specialists, leadership, and qualitative research methods.

The literature review is divided into five sections with the first being leadership. I reviewed leadership in the business world and broad leadership styles as a foundation for this section. But I covered leadership in public schools in a more specific way.

Next, I review literature on the historical perspective of the public school principalship. Principal leadership as well as roles and responsibilities of this position are included here. The same topics are covered for the library media specialist in the third part.

In the fourth section, I review literature that sheds light on the principal/librarian relationship. I particularly sought literature on the effects of that relationship on faculty, students, and each other.

Finally, I conducted a brief review of qualitative research methods literature. Case studies were specifically included. This was not to explain qualitative or case study methods exhaustively. Rather, it was included to show that these methods 1) have been used successfully, although sparingly, in library media studies and 2) since quantitative research methods have been predominately used, it seemed time to explore people's stories and their own view of their experiences.

Leadership

Leadership in general. According to Warren Bennis (1984), management is "doing things right" and leadership is "doing the right thing." Bennis' definitions come from the business point of view. The business world combines management and leadership at times. For example, managers might lead in a certain way or managers could use a particular style in a certain setting.

John Maxwell's online newsletter, Leadership Wired (2004), quoted Stephen Covey as saying that "management works in the system and leadership works on the system." These two terms may have been used interchangeably by a number of writers. However, Covey's definition shows the difference between the two terms.

Working within the system could be a simplified definition of transactional leadership. Transactional leaders are effective within the status quo. They are influential but create little change. Hartley (2004) called transactional leadership impersonal, formal, and bureaucratic.

In the school setting, principals practicing transactional leadership will lead because they have the authority to do so. They will manage their surroundings and the people within it. For example, this type of principal will make all of the decisions and the faculty and staff will follow the rules laid out for them by the principal. This school is run "by the book".

Working on the system, on the other hand, could define transformational leadership. Transformational leaders bring new ideas to the organization. They are flexible and willing to change themselves and others (Johannsen, 2004).

Transformational leadership stimulates creativity (Oplatka, 2004). This might work particularly well with classroom teachers who are feeling overwhelmed. A principal practicing transformational leadership will encourage trust, adaptability, and flexibility.

Principals who are transformational leaders will move their faculty and staff toward change and new ideas (Johannsen, 2005). Innovative ideas in this principal's school might include grade level meetings, school improvement teams, and professional learning communities.

Leadership in public schools. In education, management is defined as a role—someone with formal authority to lead. This is a very rational position. Leadership in education is also a role. However, it is informal and emotional in makeup. David Hartley (2004) discussed the idea that emotional elements are relatively new to education and have changed the way leadership is viewed in school culture.

As in the business world, management and leadership in education are discussed simultaneously, although less often. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) related the idea that supervisory leadership encompasses both the managerial and leadership role. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 1996) also gave a definition that combined the management and leadership roles.

There are different styles of leadership and different places to practice them. But in order to benefit the school culture, leadership must be encouraged (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 2002). Transactional and transformational leadership styles have already been discussed. Invitational, servant, and participative leadership are three additional styles that have made their way into education.

According to Egley (2003), invitational leadership creates a climate which invites everyone to succeed. Relationships are supreme and the principal has a real concern for faculty and staff. There is an emphasis on transforming the school setting and principals combine professional and personal practices to accomplish this task. The job satisfaction rate is high in a school with invitational leaders because teachers feel they have worth as educators and as persons.

Crippen (2005) discussed servant leadership which includes theories from Robert Greenleaf. This leadership style concentrates on service to others. The approach is very subtle. Like invitational leadership, servant leadership can transform the school culture.

Transforming the school community through servant leadership will empower teachers. They view the principal's model of service to others and, in turn, strive to serve others. But because it is so subtle, faculty and staff may only see the results of their principal's service.

The principal who is a servant-leader listens and has empathy for those in the school community. There is a healing quality about this leadership. This may be particularly important when a teacher is having difficulties. The principal can use this as a teachable moment if the faculty member asks for advice.

Participative leadership assumes that the decision-making process is a group activity. Leaders in the educational setting should focus on this as well as group functions, tasks, and behaviors (Oplatka, 2004).

This style of leadership also empowers teachers. Their opinions and ideas are welcomed by the principal. This facilitates the development of collegial norms. The principal who possesses participative leadership knows how to delegate responsibilities.

It works for the good of all when the principal asks faculty and staff to take control of a meeting or a particular task.

Perhaps the reason that management and leadership are discussed together is because both are carried out by the same person. This is true in both business and education, and it is very important to remember when examining the role of the building principal. Larry Lashway (2003) stated that principals are torn between leadership and management chores.

Public School Principals

Principals—historical perspective. The person in charge of a school has been called the principal for decades. However, the job description has changed again and again over the years. According to Grogan and Andrews (2002), each decade of the Principalship presented a different focus.

The formal role of the principal surfaced in the 1920s. This decade saw value-based pedagogy in education and principals worked to connect the school and family. The 1930s saw principals move to a more scientific manager rather than a link to home and family ideals.

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed a rise in the importance of education in a democratic society. Therefore, principals focused their attention on patriotism in schools. The late 1950s saw a shift to management and instruction for principals. This carried into the 1960s. Because of Sputnik's launch by the former Soviet Union, principals led their schools to academic excellence, particularly in science.

Social problems and accountability became focus areas in the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, McEwan (2003) stated that the principalship and school leadership faded to

the background during this time. Teaching strategies and organizational improvement were the important focal points.

Political concerns, educational reform, and preparation for the workplace became hot issues in the 1980s. Principals were asked to focus on academic achievement in their schools. All things educational were driven by the 1983 document called *A Nation at Risk* published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983).

The Commission's study found deficiencies in secondary school curriculum, college entrance requirements, and textbook content. Suggestions included student grades that reflected academic achievement and the use of standardized achievement tests. There were shortcomings in school leadership as well. The Commission found the need for improved teacher preparation, more time for teachers to be involved in professional development opportunities, and superintendent and principal leadership training.

From the 1990s through the present, instructional leadership has resurfaced for principals. Less local control and more accountability to state and national performance standards are the focal points assigned to these most recent decades.

The current trend in education is that principals should be instructional leaders (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach, 2003; Grogan and Andrews, 2003). However, studies show that principals are subject to constant pressures, inadequate time, and internal and external forces (Carlton, 1989); and that principals may not be prepared to use data, understand management strategies, or embrace reform (Hess and Kelly, 2005b). Principals usually operate within a framework of personal experience and attitude (Haycock, 1999). Furthermore, the average age of administrators is fifty

(Hartzell, 2002) and children come to school less prepared to learn (Grogan and Andrews, 2003); so where does the Principalship go from here?

As education approaches another decade of Principalship, perhaps the focus needs to be on job preparation (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach, 2003; Hess and Kelly, 2005b). Perhaps it is time to concentrate on what these instructional leaders are learning about data, student achievement, collaboration, management, and leadership.

Carlton (1989) stated that public school principals are some of the most influential public servants. Their faces change as do decades and focal points. But "the position remains a symbol of excellence in education" (Carlton, 1989, ¶ 15) and student achievement cannot be realized without "highly effective principals to facilitate, model, and lead" (McEwan, 2003).

Principals—leadership. Currently, principals are expected to be instructional leaders. However, this is their position rather than always their ability (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach, 2003). Abilock (2002) stated that many principals know what to say about leading a school. But they may not actually know how to lead.

Effective principals can lead the school community to achieve whatever mission lies before them (Tate and Dunklin, 2005). But just as these leaders can have a positive impact, so can ineffective principals have a negative impact (Waters and Kingston, 2005). Creating a vision, motivating faculty, and managing a facility are among a few of the responsibilities when leading a school.

Hess and Kelly (2005a) learned that principals do not feel equipped to be instructional leaders. There are a number of leadership styles or models that have been developed to help principals face these challenges. According to the literature

(Krajewski, 200l; Celio and Harvey, 2005; Grogan and Andrews, 2002; Hess and Kelly, 2005a, 2005b; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach, 2003), principals should be taught leadership concepts, management practices, and school improvement strategies.

Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach (2003) found that much of school leadership focuses on what principals might do rather than what they really do. A great deal of their time is spent on student safety, parent relations, and declining enrollment. Celio and Harvey (2005) pointed to the fact that even if principals have the skills to sift through data and create a vision for student achievement, they seldom have time to do so.

Despite the shortage of time and preparation downfalls, the fact remains that principal leadership is positively correlated with student achievement. The state of principalship and educational leadership is of the utmost importance. Principals must decide what responsibilities are essential and put their focus there (Waters and Kingston, 2005).

Principals—roles and responsibilities. The expectations of principals are varied. Waters and Kingston (2005) stated the primary responsibility of school leaders is student learning. Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach (2003) reported the role of the principal is to be the representative of the school culture. Tate and Dunklin (2005) claimed the principal's main responsibility is to manage three key areas of the school: student discipline, staff performance, and parent/community involvement.

As stated previously, building principals must decide what is important, and then focus on that role. However, urgency frequently trumps what is important in schools (Waters and Kingston, 2005).

Hess and Kelly (2005a) found that principals spend most of their day on the "nuts and bolts" of running a school. Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach (2003) stated that principals were limited to activities involving management and internal politics. Celio and Harvey (2005) reported principals did not have time to sift through data pertaining to student achievement.

How can principals prioritize the demands of the job? Standards which reflect essential leadership responsibilities would help (Waters and Kingston, 2005). Principals are important to the school's curriculum and instruction (Hartzell, 2002, 2003; Haycock, 1999). Responsibilities for principals might include instructional leader, curriculum coordinator, staff selector, pupil services coordinator, morale builder, professional growth stimulator, materials provider, public relations facilitator, and teacher evaluator (Krajewski and Dunklin, 2001). The role of building principals is all-encompassing. It requires knowledge of all areas of the school and is enhanced by visionary leadership (Hannon, 2005; Haycock, 1999).

Public School Librarians

Librarians—historical perspective. The school library has changed a great deal in the past 50 years and with it, the librarian. The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) traced this evolution in a report published by the U. S. Department of Education. They followed the public school library and those who staffed it from 1953 to 2000.

In 1953-1954, 36 percent of all public schools had library media centers and 40 percent had librarians. Later that decade—1958—federal funds were earmarked for books and instructional materials. However, libraries were not viewed as important to instruction during this time.

The 1960s saw the beginning of libraries and librarians that we would recognize today. Laws were passed that provided federal assistance for the purchase of school library resources. Legislation also made available funds for the acquisition of audio visual equipment.

Individual states became involved during the 1970s. They were involved in formulating goals for education funds from the federal government.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a variety of methods used to fund public school libraries. In 1981, local school districts had a choice of how to spend federal funds. One of these choices was the library. By 1984-1985, 29 percent of local funds were being used for school library media centers. This trend continued through the 1990s.

In 1999-2000, the percentage of libraries in public schools had increased to 92 percent. During that same year, 86 percent of public schools had a library media specialist. So the increase of libraries and librarians has been dramatic. The same cannot be said for funding.

Librarians—leadership. In *Why Should Principals Support School Libraries,* Gary Hartzell (2003) commented that many principals overlook libraries and library media specialists as potentially powerful instruments in public schools. But leaders they are— or can be—in such areas as instruction, curriculum, and professional development.

According to the American Library Association (2000), school library media specialists and the library programs they supervise provide educational support in four key areas. They put state and national standards into action. Librarians support and strengthen curriculum. Media centers help bridge the digital divide. Last, library media programs develop and change with the school improvement plan.

School library media specialists implement state and national standards. Miller (2004) stated library and information skills are standards-based. Learning events planned and executed by teacher-librarians incorporate standard-based inquiry-focused activities where students are active participants. Since most state standards originate from national standards, Miller urges librarians to familiarize themselves with organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Science Teachers Association.

Missouri's School Library Media Standards Handbook (2003) contains a section outlining how information and technology skills can be integrated into the K-12 curriculum. This is considered to be a companion to the Show-Me Standards, Missouri's process and performance goals. The section includes skills and activities relating to communication arts, fine arts, social studies, science, and health. They are specifically designed for librarians to use in incorporating state standards into the library media program.

Library media specialists create a library program that is effective in the support and implementation of curriculum. Miller (2004) stated the library media program is an extension of the classroom. Librarians and teachers collaborate to develop projects and lessons from the curriculum. These lessons begin in one setting and continue in the other based upon time, resources, activities, and space.

Riedling (2001) outlined research on library media specialist job descriptions. One responsibility is curriculum development. Librarians develop a broad view of the school's curriculum. Then they provide written guides for curriculum policies and procedures as well as lists of appropriate resources. Teacher librarians consult and

collaborate with classroom teachers to support, plan, and teach the accepted curriculum. Finally, librarians provide leadership in technology integration in all curriculum areas.

Library media programs help bridge the digital divide. Mason and Dodds (2005) reminded us that not every student has the same access to technology. This divide affects students who are black, Hispanic, Native American, and poor. Adequate funds are necessary to close the digital divide. But money spent unwisely does little to help. Library media specialists are informed and up-to-date on technologies that facilitate learning. As part of the school community, they can advise and assist in technology purchases and implementation.

The term digital divide is a catch-phrase that has been in existence since the mid-1990s (Vail, 2003). Carvin (2006) said 2006 marks the 10th anniversary of the term. Both agree that Internet access and equipment are only part of the equation. Carvin calls for a strong foundation in literacy skills and Vail sees the need for teacher training in technology in order to solve the digital divide.

Library media programs address both literacy and technology. Librarians can help students access a world of information by first preparing them to read and understand information provided on the Internet. Then libraries can supply the equipment and space to connect to that information. For example, library media centers can open before and after school to provide access for students without access at home.

According to Vail (2003), schools must also give their attention to teacher training and the availability of technical support as well as quality instructional resources. Teachers hesitate to use technology when there is a lack of technical support. Once

teachers are comfortable with computer programs, librarians can help integrate technology into classroom lessons.

Library media specialists are available to assist with software and hardware problems. Furthermore, they make appropriate resources available to teachers because they know the students, teachers, and curriculum. Vail says when schools address the digital divide, they will also address the achievement gap.

School library media specialists focus on student success whether it is by addressing standards, curriculum, or the digital divide. This focus positions them to contribute to the school improvement plan. Bush (2003) described the school improvement plan as a guiding document that leads a school toward improved student learning. Goals and action steps in the plan are the responsibilities of every teacher and staff member including the library media specialist.

Library media specialists are valuable assets to the school improvement plan because they work with all teachers and all students (Harvey II, 2006). Librarians can collect and analyze data, provide professional development, organize information, and locate research to enable informed decisions when they are part of the school improvement team. If they are not a part of the team, librarians must be aware of and implement the plan.

Harvey points out librarians are in tune to the needs of the school. Their knowledge of the staff, curriculum, and school improvement plan enables them to introduce instructional strategies, develop technology plans, collect data, and provide support. This involvement will impact student learning.

Library media specialists must be ready to take on this leadership role. They need to look beyond the traditional role of librarian (Hartzell, 2002). According to Jones, Jr. (2003), the school librarian needs to be the leader in establishing effective communication about the positive aspects of the library media program in the lives of students.

Librarians can lead in areas outside the media center as well. They can be part of developing instructional programs, a collaborative school culture, and a vision of commitment to student achievement. Hartzell (2003) said that nowhere is the principal's power to affect library programs more evident than in the extent to which the library media specialist has the opportunity to serve in leadership capacities outside the media center.

Librarians—roles and responsibilities. Building upon previous statements, the roles and responsibilities of librarians can encompass a large number of areas both in and out of the media center. Along with the school context and their technical skills, library media specialists should possess an enterprising attitude; energy and enthusiasm; team outlook; confidence; communication skills; and leadership qualities (Hartzell, 2003; Haycock, 1999).

Library media specialists have the ability to assist students, teachers, principals, and more when they possess the qualities listed above. They work with students on a variety of projects (Tate and Dunklin, 2005). Librarians assist students in the research process. They also instruct students in technology presentation skills.

Librarians deliver services that empower teachers (Hartzell, 2003). For example, they supply teachers with a variety of resources to complement instruction. Furthermore,

library media specialists provide technology equipment and training which teachers take back to their classrooms.

Librarians provide principals with site-level data (Abilock, 2002). They also gather research-based information for principals to use for administrative purposes. Finally, library media specialists educate administrators, parents, and community members on the value of school libraries.

According to Hartzell (2002), quality library programs can enhance student achievement. Haycock (1999) stated principals and librarians must join together to meet student needs. Both principals and library media specialists are responsible for improved access to technology, library collections based on curriculum needs and student interests, inviting media centers, and a positive attitude toward students.

There are five additional topics that both principals and librarians are responsible for. They can work together to 1) promote state and national standards, 2) include the library in the overall school program, 3) understand the educational requirements for a certified library media specialist, 4) recognize expectations of the librarian beyond checking out books, and 5) incorporate audio visual and technology into the curriculum (Wilson and MacNeil, 1998).

Library media specialists can play an important role in the public school setting. Librarians themselves must understand and accept this role (Hannon, 2005; Hartzell, 2003). Once they do, library media specialists are responsible for improving communication, with and perceptions held by principals as well as teachers. They are indispensable and must show the media center makes positive things happen in public schools (Jones, 2003).

Principal/Library Media Specialist Relationship

Relationship—effect on each other. There are similarities in the roles and responsibilities of principals and library media specialists. Wilson and Lyders (2001) reported principals and library media specialists are the only educators in the school who are directly involved in the process of learning for the whole school (p. 33). Some additional commonalities are in job preparation. Principals and librarians both study program administration, finance, curriculum, policy and law, and program evaluation. Both the principal's and librarian's positions demand leadership and management skills. Both positions require skills in empowering others to succeed and managing personnel and facilities.

Tate and Dunklin (2005) pointed out responsibilities and the nature of their work isolate librarians. Principals can also be distanced by plans, policies, and day-to-day concerns. However, when principals and librarians work together, they can assist each other in the instructional process.

Principals can update librarians in curriculum. They can include librarians in the selection process of new texts. Library media specialists can alert principals to available resources that correspond with district curricula and pedagogy.

The American Library Association (2000) listed areas of concern for both principals and library media specialists. Student achievement, state and national standards, and district curriculum are three where collaborative efforts will prove beneficial.

By including the library media specialist in instructional planning, the principal can facilitate information literacy and reading for understanding. This will lead to

student achievement. When the librarian is part of the school improvement team, the principal ensures that library resources will complement district curriculum as well as state and national standards.

Ken Haycock (1999) stated library media specialists collaborate more with teachers when principals encourage team planning. If the principal has a positive attitude toward the librarian, more effective instructional planning will take place between teachers and the librarian. Furthermore, teachers and library media specialists collaborate more effectively when principals expect grade-level or departmental meetings.

The attitude of librarians and principals toward collaboration affects the degree to which the librarian serves as an instructional partner (Roberson, Applin, and Schweinle, 2005, p. 51). Moreover, the principal has the greatest influence on the school community with the attitude and actions displayed as instructional leader. Therefore, the principal's perception of the library media program influences financial support, student achievement as well as collaboration.

Roberson, Applin, and Schweinle (2005) also found that principals form their attitudes toward librarians within the school setting. A study conducted in Kentucky (Alexander, Smith, and Carey, 2003) found even if library media specialists perceived themselves as vital to the school community, the principals' perceptions were still the most important.

The Kentucky Study (Alexander, Smith, and Carey, 2003) examined school principals' perceptions of library media specialists. Surveys found that elementary school principals thought information access was the most important job for librarians.

Of the five responsibilities listed on the survey, responding elementary principals rated learning and teaching next to last.

Hartzell (2002) stated many principals are not aware that they play a significant role in maximizing the library's contribution to the school community (p. 4). Librarians must develop a positive working relationship with principals to overcome any misconceptions or misunderstandings they may have about library media programs.

Hannon (2005) listed eight suggestions for building such a relationship. The top four were 1) be enthusiastic about your work, 2) create goals and objectives to share with the principal, 3) make technology an integral part of the library media program, and 4) strive to make the school library program the center of teaching and learning.

Jones (2003) recommended the executive briefing as a tool for principals and librarians to develop and maintain positive communication. During these briefings, the two can plan the library program and its goals. The librarian can offer to direct in-service training as part of the principal's professional development agenda. Finally, they can control budget spending by targeting purchase of the most useful equipment and resources.

A positive working relationship between the principal and library media specialist can have a significant effect on the school community. The list ranges from financial to student achievement. Hartzell (2003) reported "principals should support school libraries because it is in both their students' and their own best interests to do so" (p.1).

Relationship—effect on faculty. Teachers are concerned with meeting the needs of their students. They address these needs through instruction, curriculum, and school

improvement initiatives. Library media specialists and classroom teachers can work together in these areas (American Library Association, 2000).

Haycock (1999) said it is the librarian's responsibility to create an awareness of the library media program's role in instruction. They can inform teachers of pertinent resources and collaborate with them to design new lessons. Librarians can improve access to and knowledge of technology by providing teachers with training sessions. They can also make sure they are part of team efforts to improve teaching and learning.

In order to provide resources, librarians must be familiar with the curriculum. They can accomplish this by serving along side classroom teachers on curriculum committees. Promoting information literacy as part of the curriculum and a willingness to join teachers in the classroom will also show the faculty that librarians are instructional partners.

Finally, Hartzell (2003) stated librarians are providers of data and information for school improvement. But their library media programs can serve as improvement instruments because the library develops and changes along with the school improvement plan.

Relationship—effect on students. Lance (1994, 2001) and Lance and Loertscher (2005) provided an overview of their research on the impact of school libraries and librarians on student achievement. The Colorado Study, conducted in 1993, was one of the earliest and most well known research projects investigating funding, staff, collections, and instruction of the librarian and the media center.

Students who attended school with well-funded library programs scored higher on reading tests than students in schools with low library funding. Economic status, location, and education level of adults in the community made no difference.

The staff size of library programs as well as the variety and quality of its collection impacted student achievement. This is because students have access to large numbers of excellent materials in multiple formats. Their libraries are also staffed to ensure ample service to students.

Finally, the Colorado Study found when library media specialists took part in teaching, students scored higher on tests. Therefore, teacher-librarians have a positive impact on student achievement.

The original Colorado Study paved the way for Lance and others to initiate quantitative research in other states. Alaska, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts conducted similar studies in 2000. Texas and Oregon researched libraries and student achievement in 2001 followed by Iowa and New Mexico in 2002. Michigan conducted a study in 2003 and Illinois had their study in 2005. These are just a few of the states choosing to replicate the Colorado Study.

There have been 14 states since 2000 that have conducted Colorado-style studies. These researchers followed Lance's lead and conducted school library studies and their relationship to student learning. Over 8,700 schools were involved and approximately 2.6 million students (Lance and Loertscher, 2005). The findings were consistent in all 14 studies. The studies conclude that library staffing is a positive predictor of student achievement. Furthermore, staff activities like teaching, collaboration, and collection development have a positive effect on student learning.

Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri State Library commissioned a similar study in 2003. *Show Me Connection: How School Library Media Centers Impact Student Achievement* (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003) was a quantitative study with a goal of determining the relationship between Missouri's school libraries, the services they provide, and student achievement. The results showed that school libraries, consistent usage of books and other materials, and access to school library services significantly impacts student achievement.

Missouri's 2003 study found that school library media programs impact student learning (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003). Specifically, library services exert a 10.6 percent statistically significant impact on student achievement. There were 11 components included in this study. They ranged from personnel (e.g. qualifications, staff size, activities, management) to facilities (e.g. space, access, technology), to resources (e.g. holdings, summer reading programs, budget).

Library qualifications, access, budget, and technology impacted student learning in a significant way. Library usage and summer reading programs had a strong impact. Library space, holdings, staff size, management, and activities showed no real significance in student achievement. In conclusion, *Show-Me Connection*, Missouri's version of the Colorado Study, found that consistent library usage, resources that are regularly used, summer reading programs, and access to the library significantly impacts student achievement.

Because this study found that library media centers impact student achievement, it can now be said that school libraries in Missouri positively influence students. Qualified librarians work closely with students in libraries that provide ample resources and access to technology. Libraries are open and available in order for students to read, research, and learn. Students use a variety of resources during school as well as during the summer to increase and improve their reading interests and skills. Finally, students score higher on Missouri Assessment Program, the standards-based assessment.

The American Association of School Libraries (2004) addressed school libraries and No Child Left Behind, the United States' current initiative to improve student learning. School library media centers can move schools closer to the goal of 100 percent literacy by 2013.

The American Association of School Libraries (2004) provided five goals for school and their libraries to meet the challenges of No Child Left Behind. More importantly, these goals will bring principals, teachers, and library media specialists together for the good of all students.

First, library media programs can help ensure all students are literate by 2013. School librarians can implement learning strategies, partner with classroom teachers to instruct, and promote the joy of reading. This goes beyond depending on textbooks. It introduces students to a variety of reading materials. Furthermore, the library media specialist can act as a motivator, reaching out to all students and their particular needs.

Next, library media specialists help ensure all students pass state tests. Their library programs, if well designed, meet the needs of all students no matter what their socio-economic or academic levels may be. Librarians collaborate with classroom

teachers to teach skills and information literacy aligned with grade level benchmarks and individual learning abilities. This approach deepens learning.

Library media specialists also ensure that all students are technologically literate. A well-equipped and up-to-date media center bridges the digital divide. Librarians can provide equipment and research guidance to students and training for teachers so technology can be integrated into classroom learning.

Fourth, library media programs help ensure teachers have the resources and skills needed to be highly qualified. For example, librarians work to provide on site training for teachers in technology and research techniques. They are also partners in searching for and implementing new and effective teaching strategies while providing the necessary resources to execute the new approach.

The last goal set by the American Association of School Librarians to address No Child Left Behind is helping to ensure schools remain committed to best practices. School library media specialists want more for their students than simply passing a test. They want to improve the school community. Promoting inquiry-based learning; serving on teams and committees; and communicating with administrators, faculty, and parents are good for the school. But more importantly, it is good for the students.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research in general. Qualitative research has come into the mainstream over the past 20 years. There are still misconceptions regarding how and why to use this type of research as well as what the various words and terms mean. Piantanida and Garman (1999) sorted through the components of qualitative research.

They suggested two important issues in qualitative research: stance and voice. First, stance refers to the orientation a researcher brings to the study. Next, voice suggests the role a researcher takes on when presenting the topic in writing. The researcher must decide how personal the participation and writing will be. Will a story be told? Will a position be advocated? Will the researcher be an active participant or a neutral observer?

Piantanida and Garman further stated that a major theme in qualitative research is the need to create a place for unheard voices to be heard and unknown positions to be presented. In a study conducted by Oberg and Easton (1995) of library media programs, participants expressed their appreciation of having their voices recognized. The librarians in this study valued the chance to express their opinions.

Yin (1994) stated qualitative research contains rich description and flexibility. Education provides an ideal setting for a variety of activities, viewpoints, issues, and contributors. The flexibility of qualitative research allows investigators to change as school situations, faculty participation, and student activities change.

Merriam (1998) found that qualitative research fits educational studies. She listed four characteristics of good qualitative research. First, research promotes an understanding of the meaning of the experience. It helps the reader understand the meaning participants have constructed from their experiences. Qualitative research also builds toward theory from the observations and understandings gained in the field. Last, this kind of research helps us understand how the parts work together to form a whole.

According to Stake (1995), there are three major differences between quantitative and qualitative research. First, the purpose of the inquiry is either explanation or

understanding. Next, the role of the researcher is impersonal or personal. Third, knowledge gained from the research is either discovered or constructed.

Stake also expressed the importance of the individual and the context of the study. Qualitative research describes how things were for a particular person in a certain place at a particular time. This gives the reader the opportunity to gain an experiential understanding of the situation. It also demands that the researcher accept differences in interpretation.

Qualitative research—case studies. Yin (1994) described case studies as an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. There are multiple sources of evidence that come together forming a central theme. Case studies are most beneficial when there is a how or why question posed and when the investigator has little or no control over the events or setting being studies.

Yin further stated case studies provide an in-depth understanding of a situation and meaning for those involved. Furthermore, insights gained from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research (Yin, 1994, p. 19).

It is impossible to give a clear-cut definition of case study (Stake, 1995). The time frame ranges from a week in length to well over a year. The researcher makes a unique contribution while the reader gains an equally unique meaning. But in qualitative case studies, the aim is to take a particular case and get to know it well. This can be accomplished when the researcher is patient, reflective, and willing to see all viewpoints.

Case studies are useful and readers will be amazed when they recognize how relevant the study is to their own situation. Stake (1995) expressed:

Yes, urban teachers often reject examples of rural schools, and vice versa—but

much less likely after they have read the studies. Most find a commonality of

process and situation. It startles us all to find our own perplexities in the lives of

others (p. 7).

Qualitative research—my case study. Oberg and Easton (1995) conducted a study

involving library media programs. A qualitative approach was used. The researchers

found that they gathered valuable information, affirmed the current direction of library

programs, and built an awareness of issues and perspectives. . They also found that the

librarians involved in the study appreciated the opportunity to participate.

Oberg, Hay, and Henri (2000) researched the role of the principal in relation to

school library programs. They also chose to conduct a qualitative study. The

international study involved seven countries: Australia, Canada, Scotland, Finland,

France, and South Korea. The purpose was to study ways in which principals support

library work. During their research project, Oberg, Hay, and Henri found that there are

frequent references to librarians and principals in professional literature but few

references in research literature.

The use of qualitative methods for these studies allowed the researchers to

examine how the parts work together to form a whole (Merriam, 1998; Oberg, Hay, and

Henri, 2000). It also gave them the opportunity to thoroughly understand the viewpoints

of participants (Oberg and Easton, 1995; Stake, 1995). Qualitative research has worked

well in these studies. Specifically, case studies also have a distinct advantage in certain

situations.

Case studies work well in situations where researchers want to know why an innovation worked or failed. They also work when investigators are interested in how a relationship affects a particular setting. Reflecting on and becoming familiar with such situations does not lead to brand new discoveries. Rather, it leads to a refinement of understanding and an acceptance of multiple viewpoints (Stake, 1995).

Education researchers and practitioners can use qualitative case studies to investigate the role that principals and library media specialists play in learning and instruction. Keith Curry Lance on the Library Research Service website (n.d.) called for compelling success stories told by a variety of voices. Lance and Loertscher (2005) saw the need for such stories to be told to a wide audience. When a principal and librarian have a relationship that promotes learning and instruction, these researchers suggest telling the stories to principals, teachers, technology specialists, and parents. They advocate recording and sharing success stories. Qualitative case studies seem to be an appropriate way to tell the story.

Chapter 3

Methods

Introduction

Public school administrators take on a number of roles. These building leaders must learn how to utilize faculty and staff in order to accomplish all that is asked of them. Library media specialists can act as instructional partners, technology specialists, and professional team members.

Administrators, for several reasons, under utilize library media specialists. First, there are negative perceptions of school librarians. Second, the professional training obtained by administrators seldom mentions library media specialists. Third, stereotypical images of librarians still endure (Alexander, Smith, and Carey, 2003; Hartzell, 1997, 2002; Roberson, Applin, and Schweinle, 2005; Wilson and MacNeil, 1998).

Administrators are challenged to be instructional leaders and track student achievement. However, principals are drawn away from these educational issues by "daily emergencies" (Johnson, 2004, p. 24). Library media specialists today can act as instructional partners in the public school community. Zsiray stated that the experiences of library media specialists and principals parallel each other (2003). Therefore, these two educators can work together in a positive relationship sharing responsibilities.

I examined the working relationship of the principal and library media specialist in a public school setting. I utilized an individual case study in order to explore and describe the role of each and the effect it has on the school community. Yin (1994) explained this research strategy contributes to our understanding of unique, real-life

events (p. 2-3). The principal and library media specialist who were part of this study certainly possessed a unique relationship worth studying.

The principal/library media specialist relationship studied was chosen for its quality and accessibility. The setting was one public school building. The focus of the study centered on how the principal utilized the library media specialist to improve learning and instruction in their school community.

The content of Chapter Three detailed all aspects of my study. First, I described the participants and the methods I used to find them and secure their involvement. Next, I discussed the data collection process. In the third section, I gave an overview of how I structured my study as well as how it unfolded.

The fourth section described data analysis. Here, I gave details about coding and interpretation of data. Next, I explained the need to record lessons I learned from conducting this study. Finally, I discussed the challenges I anticipated as I prepared to begin my research.

Participants

I conducted the case study at an elementary school with an exemplary library media program. The program was deemed outstanding by Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Missouri Association of School Librarians (MASL). The latter group routinely recognizes leading library media specialists as well as outstanding administrators.

I contacted the Library Media and Technology Consultant at DESE and the past president of MASL. Each person gave me a list of possible school districts where exceptional library media programs existed. I compiled a list of sites from their

information that were a manageable travel distance for me. I looked for school districts in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area as well as those in Southeast Missouri.

There were a number of school districts on the list from DESE and MASL that were located in central and western Missouri. These, however, would have been too far away for me to visit on a regular basis. Since there were no Southeast Missouri school districts on my list, I concentrated on two school districts in the St. Louis area.

A quality library media program was only part of the equation as I searched for a research site. I also looked for a positive working relationship between the library media specialist and building principal. I wanted this library program and positive relationship to be situated in an elementary school because my experience and expertise are in elementary schools.

Individuals involved in the study consisted of a library media specialist and building principal from the same building. I looked for one school building within a school district for my case study because this maximized exploration of the role of the library media specialist and her relationship with the principal.

I was unfamiliar with the personnel at the two St. Louis school districts, so I contacted the administrative offices. My initial contacts were with assistant superintendents in charge of curriculum. These administrators directed me to their directors of library services or lead librarians. I stayed in contact with the administration of one school district but received no further response from the other administrative offices.

Making contact with the lead librarians resembled my experiences with the district administrators. One lead librarian forwarded a list of principals and library media

specialists, the school where they worked, and contact information. The other library program director did not respond.

Even though I was unfamiliar with the people at both school districts, I found one district to be very cordial and receptive to my requests. Because of their responses and the fact that one of their schools had an exemplary program, I used them for my research.

I emailed several principals from the lead librarian's list of elementary schools. Each principal sent me an initial response. As time passed, all but one principal dropped out for one reason or another. The remaining school was the first one with which I made contact. I perceived this school to be open to my research despite the fact that I did not have a previous relationship with either the principal or library media specialist.

Data Collection

In order for this case study to be successful, the data collection had to be detailed, and rich in context (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, I conducted two formal interviews and numerous observations. I included a follow-up session with each interview and also gave the principal and library media specialist a paper copy of the interview transcripts. This gave them the opportunity to add to or clarify any of their responses.

I also collected documents to insure all aspects of the case were examined. I studied the district's library media curriculum, library media schedules and sign-up sheets, memos, and emails. I used triangulation as a methodology for studying these documents, interviews, and observations to guarantee a more well-rounded understanding of the case itself.

Stake (1995) described triangulation as a protocol to "get it right" (p. 107). There is a need in qualitative research to check for accuracy and for confirmation. This can be

done through data source, investigator, or theory triangulation and member checking. I

employed data source triangulation to make sure my observations, interviews, and

document examinations all carried the same meaning despite the different methods of

information retrieval.

I began the process of collecting needed paperwork and permissions early in the

2006-2007 school year. I sought and obtained IRB approval from University of

Missouri-St. Louis. My chosen school district, Green Public School System, also

required that I follow their application process. This continued throughout the fall and

winter months. By mid March 2007, I was ready to collect data.

I visited Greenwood Elementary for approximately two months and used

pseudonyms in my field notes and memos the entire time. I continued to use these

assigned names during the entire research process. This was to protect the identity of

everyone involved. Green School District and Greenwood Elementary School were

names of my choice. I gave the principal and library media specialist the opportunity to

create their own pseudonyms. They both declined and allowed me to make the choice.

While there, I toured the school building's interior and exterior taking note of the

surrounding neighborhood. I observed informal library activities as well as scheduled

lessons and research sessions. All of these were recorded in field notes. I spent the end

of each visit talking with Melanie Gordon, the library media specialist, about what I had

observed. Furthermore, there were many times we discussed the previous observation on

my next visit.

I conducted one formal interview each with the principal and library media

specialist. These were audio taped with the consent of my participants and transcribed

later. I developed a set of field notes to accompany the interviews documenting the setting and conversations that occurred before and after the recorded portion of the interviews. I gave the transcripts to my participants for the purpose of additions or corrections. None were needed.

I collected a number of documents during my visits to Greenwood. I examined teacher sign-up sheets and lesson plans used in the library media center. School and library newsletters, student achievement records, and demographics came from Greenwood Elementary School and its website. Melanie gave me the Green School District library media curriculum and emails from the district library coordinator. I used this textual information to confirm what I observed and discussed with my participants.

I also used peer examination throughout this data collection process. Calling upon respected educators in the field allowed me to gather feedback from others who are familiar with the type of setting and positions about which I am studying. They affirmed my interpretations and suggested alternative viewpoints to my own.

Stake (1995) reported that gathering data requires lists of research questions to be prepared in advance. Therefore, I developed a set of interview questions to ask the principal and library media specialist (see Appendixes C and D for a complete list of interview questions). I constructed these lists of questions using the Missouri School Library Media Standards Handbook as a model as well as feedback from a principal and library media specialist in the field. I included open-ended questions and planned for follow-up interviews as needed.

I audio taped each interview and later transcribed the interviews checking for accuracy. One way to ensure the interviews contain correct information is to take notes

along with audio taping the conversations. Another technique is to use member checking. I employed both methods to make sure I had the best and most accurate information possible.

I conducted observations to view the participants in their school environment. I used field notes to document what I saw and heard. I observed the library media specialist during her class sessions. I also conducted observations during times set aside for collaboration, routine tasks, and informal times with faculty and students.

I observed Dr. Sandy Innes, Greenwood Elementary School's principal, as she conducted conversations with faculty and staff. I also used every opportunity I had to talk with and observe Sandy in her office and around the school. I held debriefing interviews after most observations to give us the opportunity for discussions and explanations.

Dr. Innes and I negotiated a timeline to conduct my study. We knew it would be during the 2006-2007 school year after receiving approval from the school district and university. We considered end-of year activities for Greenwood and the Missouri Assessment Program tests which change the building's routine. My visits ranged from 30 minutes to three hours. I arrived at Greenwood Monday afternoons and Wednesday mornings. At the end of each Wednesday visit, I asked about the next week's schedule. I changed my regular visits if Melanie Gordon, the library media specialist at Greenwood, suggested a different day or time.

I observed Melanie Gordon in the library media center as she was involved in a variety of activities. These activities included scheduled instruction time with students, personal and collaborative planning time, working with individuals, and informal

conversations with faculty and staff. I didn't plan to observe a particular activity. I took "pot luck" instead, taking field notes on whatever happened while I was there.

I scheduled all meetings with Sandy Innes because she rarely had free time. I later found out she worked from a very strict calendar of meetings and events. Once I had to schedule a meeting with Sandy in order to schedule a more formal meeting with her. I took advantage of several occasions when she met or talked with faculty members in my presence.

I collected and examined documents to add depth and richness to the case study. These documents included memos, minutes, records, and agendas. I used memos from administrators as well as the lead librarian. I collected appropriate curricula and also used student testing data that is posted on the school district's website. Finally, I gathered and studied meeting agendas and emails pertinent to the library media center.

Melanie's class schedules and sign-in sheets were used in two ways. These records gave me documentation of the topics covered during her teaching sessions and who was involved. I also used them as conversation starters asking Melanie and Dr. Innes to explain the part each article played in the teaching and learning experience.

Procedures

My first step in conducting the individual case study was to find a suitable setting. I notified the Library Media and Technology Consultant at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. I also contacted the past president of Missouri Association of School Librarians. I asked for elementary schools where the principal and library media specialist had a positive working relationship.

I compiled a list of possible study sites based on location. I contacted the assistant superintendent and lead librarian from one school district who, in turn, gave me a list of possible elementary schools. I received a positive response from one principal and librarian.

I spoke to the district's Director of Data Analysis and Quality Management. After completing the appropriate applications, I received permission to conduct my case study. The elementary school principal wrote a letter giving permission for my study to take place during the 2006-2007 school year. My last step is to gain permission from the university.

I negotiated a time frame for the study with my participants. I worked with Dr. Innes to make sure I did not disrupt the instructional atmosphere of the building or student learning. I conducted my research during the spring of the school year when all normal activities were underway and made sure I did not disrupt special testing times.

At the beginning of my data collection, I allowed time to become familiar with the school building and my two participants. On my first visit to Greenwood Elementary School, I toured the school observing both its physical and intrinsic characteristics. Once Melanie, Sandy, and I felt comfortable with the research schedule and each other, I began my weekly visits to Greenwood.

The formal interviews took place near the end of my case study. I added additional observation days as special events or activities were brought to my attention. I collected documents throughout my entire study. Whenever the library media specialist or principal thought of something that might be beneficial to my study, they would pass it along to me.

Data Analysis

I built an understanding of the case using interviews, observations, and examination of relevant documents. By the time data collection was complete, I had a detailed description of the case. I accomplished this by gathering my data, developing a coding system, and applying that system to the data. There were times I analyzed as I collected my data. I also took the opportunity to review all of my data at the end of my study looking for recurring themes. Then I interpreted my findings and recorded lessons learned.

According to Stake (1995), there is no specific time to officially begin data analysis. We must seek to find meaning in our first impressions as well as our last report. In fact, Merriam (1998) encouraged analysis during data collection. "You undermine your entire project by waiting until after all the data are collected before beginning analysis" (p. 161).

Using this method of data collection and analysis, the six steps mentioned previously happened simultaneously. I gathered data, developed a coding system, and applied codes while I analyzed and interpreted my findings. Finally, I recorded all of this in rich detail. Following is a discussion of each of those steps.

Gather data. I collected more data than I needed by keeping detailed field notes. Kvale (1996) suggested distinguishing between essential and nonessential information and removing the unnecessary material. The necessity of the data depends upon the purpose of the research. I wrote down everything I saw and heard because, at the beginning of my study, I did not yet know what would be necessary.

Merriam (1998) also discussed targeting essential data. Researchers must assess interviews, observations, and documents. The quality of the information must be considered. Furthermore, reflections should be added to interviews, details added to observations, and authenticity of documents evaluated in order to build the database for analysis.

Merriam (1998) described the thoughts that should be going through the researchers mind as all of the data is brought together. We should strive to capture our reflections, and form tentative themes and hunches. We can list things to pursue and possible ideas to consider. This is also the time to note additional questions to ask, things to observe, and documents to look for.

Develop a coding system. Kvale (1996) stated that coding data provides a structure to the material. David Loertscher's *Taxonomies of the School Library Media Program* (Loertscher, 2002) provided some measure of structure to my coding process. Loertscher's framework, however, did not limit my search for categories and patterns. Rather, I remained open to any emergent themes important to the study even if they did not fit neatly into Loertscher's taxonomies.

I searched for patterns even as data was coded. I made notations and kept track of ideas, hunches, and additional questions in this same manner. This was also the time I began to sort and group my data watching for recurring patterns. Coding interview transcripts, observation field notes, and document copies gave me an organized way to find specific data.

Apply codes. Once I developed a coding system, I applied the codes to my interviews, observations, and documents. My approach was systematic, but flexible (Merriam,

1998). I constructed categories and themes by examining one piece of data at a time. I applied codes by comparing each data piece to the previous one and build categories and themes.

As I applied my codes, I kept in mind the purpose of my research. The analysis that came from the coded data described the case and facilitated understanding. In addition, it helped extend understanding and perhaps lead to new meanings (Stake, 1995). *Analyze data.* Data collection and analysis was ongoing. But when categories begin to emerge with regularity, it was time to analyze the data that had been collected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I looked for information that contributed to the purpose of my study— why and how this particular relationship worked for the principal and library media specialist.

During the analysis of interviews, I developed meanings from the data which helped shed light on what my participants had expressed. I also remembered what is not said may be just as important as what is said during interviews (Kvale, 1996). My goal for observations was to communicate an understanding of the setting. The data presented in the documents provided readers with an insight of all aspects of my case (Merriam, 1998).

Interpret findings. I wanted to provide the reader of my research with high-quality information to study (Stake, 1995). Consequently, I used descriptive detail as I interpreted the data. I occasionally made inferences rather than simply describing the case. Since interpretation of the data occurred throughout the study, I verified my interpretations during my interviews with the principal and library media specialist (Kvale, 1996).

I was aware of my biases and alert to any assumptions that I may have had, especially during the interpretation of information. I brought my experiences as principal and library media specialist to this setting but I did not want them to stand in the way of presenting the perspectives of the participants in my study. I wanted the readers of my research to understand the experiences of this particular elementary school principal and library media specialist.

Record lessons learned. I reached a time when I needed to stop gathering, coding, analyzing, and interpreting data. My sources had been exhausted and I did not want to over-extend the themes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This was when I brought all of my information together to relate my understanding of the case. As I recorded my interpretations and lessons learned, I sought to do so ethically, critically, and with great detail.

It was my intent that readers evaluate my understanding of the case, relate to the participants' experiences, and draw some of their own conclusions. So my final report was rich in detail and description. I tried not to take anything at face value as I reported my findings. I used a critical eye, ear, and mind. I conducted my study ethically so readers would be assured the information reported was secure (Kvale, 1996).

Challenges

I conducted my case study in the best possible manner in order to secure the most valuable and usable information. Challenges I considered as I organized the study were case, time frame, and study boundaries. First, I chose the best case possible. It took time and effort to make contacts and review information obtained from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri Association of School Librarians.

Another challenge was setting appropriate boundaries such as time and events. I considered my schedule, the school district calendar, and the elementary school's activities. The availability of the participants was also a concern. It was extremely important to everyone that student learning remained the most important activity during my study.

I knew other challenges would arise as I planned and conducted my study. I needed to secure enough information because sufficient information must be collected to insure a rich, deep study. I hoped my study would have implications for other settings. I wanted my data, interpretations, and lessons learned to be such that other library media specialists, principals, and classroom teachers could learn from the results.

Chapter 4

Researcher's Description of the Setting

Introduction

It was important to me that readers not only see the case from my perspective, but also be able to visualize the setting as if they had actually been there. Therefore, I created a descriptive narrative allowing readers to vicariously visit the site with me (Merriam, 1998). In this way, readers will have the opportunity to meet the elementary school principal and library media specialist who were my participants. They will also be able to visit the school building, school district, and community where my participants worked together to meet the needs of their students.

First I described the school district, Green School District. Then I told about the community of which that district plays an integral part. Next I portrayed the school where my study took place, Greenwood Elementary School. I included an overview of the faculty, staff, and students here. Finally, I introduced my participants—Dr. Sandy Innes, elementary school principal, and Melanie Gordon, Greenwood's library media specialist.

School District—Green Public Schools

My research site was part of a large public school system located in a metropolitan area of Missouri. Green School District covered 150 square miles which included parts of two counties. Over ten individual communities with an estimated 150,000 residents made up this school district. Green Public School District was known for personalized education and an innovative work environment (Anonymous School District, 2006).

Within the district, there were approximately 22,000 students dispersed among 19 elementary schools, six middle schools, and four high schools. The average number of students per classroom was 21 for elementary schools and 22 for middle and high schools. Ninety four percent of these students graduated. It was one of the core beliefs of Green School District that all students become active participants in their learning (Anonymous School District, 2006).

Over 3,000 employees met the needs of the children in this school district and all had the responsibility to maximize student achievement. Maintenance staff was charged with providing a clean and safe learning environment while administrators created a welcoming climate for students, parents, and community members. Quality instruction was of the utmost importance which explained why 96 percent of classes were taught by highly qualified teachers, 68 percent of these teachers had advanced degrees, and the average years of experience was 12 years.

Green School District's mission was that all students be provided with a dynamic curriculum within a safe and caring environment. But students were expected to take an active role in their own learning. Families also had the responsibility to support the educational process. This mission found its way into the district's comprehensive school improvement plan. There were four goals that address instruction, achievement, school climate, and general operations. But the goal that continued to weave its way through all that described this school district was increased student achievement.

Green School District earned the accreditation rating of "Distinction with Performance" from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Fifty percent of Green's students performed in the top two levels on all Missouri

Assessment Program tested grade levels in communication arts and math. Furthermore, this school district met adequate yearly progress for 100 percent of all accountable student groups under No Child Left Behind.

It was no wonder Green Public Schools reported to the community a strong commitment to student achievement. Improving academic performance was part of the district's culture.

Community

Residents of this community have come to expect a quality education for their children. In fact, the community was known for educational excellence as well as its natural beauty, growing residential areas, and solid economy. Situated in the heart of Missouri, this region combined elements of city and country. There were rolling hills, rivers and creeks, and parks and forests. But all of this sat next to a thriving metropolitan area.

The community was a mix of residential and business sites. Interstate and state highways gave easy access to this locale as well as surrounding communities. As revealed in city and county reports, the population of this area was predominately White (93 percent) with Asian (3 percent), African American (2 percent), Hispanic (1 percent), and Native American (1 percent) comprising the rest of the residents. The medium household income in the Green Public School community was slightly more than $66,000. Less than 15 percent of these residents were 65 or older. In fact, the median age for the residents of this area was 38.

The demographics for this community matched the location of my research site. There were hills and winding roads leading to Greenwood Elementary School. The

building itself was surrounded by homes—some established and others under construction. This was definitely an area where young families with high expectations would bring their children to grow up and go to school.

School Building—Greenwood Elementary School

The previous observation was underscored the first time I visited Greenwood Elementary School. I drove down a hill and came to a stop sign. In front of me were large houses and construction zones. My printed directions to the school told me to turn left. I followed the street two blocks and turned directly into one of Greenwood's several parking areas. The building seemed to be nestled right in the middle of subdivisions, new homes, and construction sites.

My arrival time coincided with the beginning of the school day (9:00 a.m.). As I pulled into a parking spot, a mother and daughter walked along the sidewalk leading from the street to Greenwood's front entrance. The family dog, on a leash, accompanied them. Mom and Beagle said their goodbyes to the young girl who was obviously eager to enter the building on her own.

I parked my vehicle and walked along the same sidewalk which led to the front doors of Greenwood. A car pulled up to the circle drive and parked. A father and son got out of the car and walked up to the entrance. With a pat on the boy's back and a straightening of the book bag, Dad and Son parted.

I later learned that Greenwood Elementary School had been open for three years. It was the newest elementary school in the district and its design was very much like other K-5 buildings in Green School District. It had a brick exterior and there were large windows which undoubtedly let natural light flood into the rooms and hallways. There

were several park benches under the covered entryway and green shrubbery dotted the neatly landscaped yard.

I approached the school's front doors just as the young girl and boy had—walking up a wide covered sidewalk leading to the multiple front doors. Signs posted on the interior set of doors directed all visitors to check in at the Office before proceeding to other areas of the building. Upon opening the front doors, I entered a spacious commons with comfortable looking chairs and a couch. A large skylight covered the ceiling and potted greenery on either side of the couch made this area seem like an extension of the outdoors.

Red wagons were lined up on the left and a glass display cabinet stood against the wall on the right. During a later visit, I saw students delivering newspapers with these wagons. The display cabinet held pictures and newspaper articles depicting Greenwood Elementary School. There was also some information about the school district. The Office door was next to the cabinet.

I reported to the Office as directed. One of Greenwood's secretaries greeted me as I signed the "guest list" and put on the paper name tag provided to all visitors. When I told the secretary the reason for my visit, she pointed me in the direction of the library which was just off of the front commons area. As a matter of fact, the school library was directly across from the front entrance. As suggested in library magazines and journals, Greenwood's library was located in the heart of the school.

I entered the library media center which was already busy with children and adults. Melanie Gordon, Greenwood's library media specialist, welcomed me and I stated the purpose of this first visit to Greenwood—to visit with her and Dr. Innes, view

the library, and tour the rest of the school building. Melanie invited me to store my belongings in the library office located behind the circulation desk.

The library office was a small room filled with carts, boxes, and cabinets. Shelves lined the walls and there was a desk, work area, sink, and a place to hang coats (which is what I did). I reentered the library just in time to hear the assistant principal begin his daily morning announcements over the intercom. Student birthdays were mentioned followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Two students led this activity. Everyone in the library stopped what they were doing, stood, and participated in the Pledge. Afterwards, the school day officially began at approximately 9:05 a.m.

There were no classes scheduled to visit the library during the morning. But there was a steady stream of students and adults in and out of the library. I used this time to observe the library by focusing on the floor plan, furnishings, and equipment. I sat at one of the tables near the middle of the room and simply observed.

There were double doors leading into the library with floor-to-ceiling windows on either side. Curtains were pulled back from the windows allowing sunshine from the commons area to flood into the library. Four tables with six chairs each were arranged just inside the library entrance. Just beyond this seating area were low bookshelves running at an angle down the middle of the room. Taller shelves lined the wall to the left. These were the nonfiction shelves. Fiction books filled the low shelves.

Another seating area identical to the first one was situated to the rear of the library. To the right of these tables was a large alcove with computers, printers, and a SmartBoard. Young students could access the SmartBoard by means of a wooden step built by the library assistant's husband. I later learned that the printers were networked

to computers throughout the building. One printer was used by the Art, Music, and Physical Education teachers. The other was a color printer used by the entire building.

The circulation desk was directly across the room from the nonfiction shelves. It was situated in such a way that the library media specialist could view the entire library while checking out books or working at the desk. There were two computers on which Melanie Gordon, her assistant, and volunteers could work and check out books. A storage shelf stood behind the desk area.

Two sign-up lists were also located on the circulation desk. One was a student sign-in sheet and the other was a library schedule which teachers used to sign up for a library class time. I would later learn that both lists played an important role in the life of the library and served specific purposes.

Even though the library area already described was large enough to seat two classes (45-50 students), there was still additional space in the back of the room. Two additional spaces were beyond the second seating area. First, there was a casual seating area looking much like a living room. Lounge-type chairs surrounded a coffee table. On one wall were shelves of easy-to-read books. On the other wall was a faux fireplace looking very real and inviting.

Tucked away in the area furthest from the library's front doors, was perhaps the room's most unique feature. An amphitheater wrapped around the back corner of the library media center. Four wide steps where students could sit and listen to a story from Ms.. Gordon or a presentation from a special guest rose to the wall. A television sat on one side and a white board on an easel sat on the other side of the amphitheater.

After observing the library and its activities for half of the morning, I decided it was time to tour the rest of Greenwood Elementary School. Melanie told me the school was made up of three halls—two were short and one was long. I decided to tackle the short halls first; so upon leaving the library, I turned left. There was a large bulletin board in this hallway with the caption "Who Will Dunk the Principals?". The purpose of the display was to encourage reading among the students and there were quite a few students who had earned the opportunity to display their names on the board giving them the chance to "dunk the principals."

The cafeteria was the first area I found in the short hall. It was a large, open room filled with round tables and chairs. The walls were covered with brightly colored murals and there was a portable sign at the entrance with the day's lunch menu hand written. Doors and window-like openings along one wall lead to the kitchen. This was where students picked up their lunches.

The hallway was wide and the floors were carpeted with the same green carpet that was in the library, office, and commons area. Two round tables with chairs sat just outside the fifth grade classrooms. A group of students was working with an adult (teaching assistant) on some kind of activity. I found similar work areas throughout the building.

The hallways were lined with student work—art projects, student-made posters, and hand-written documents. There were no "cookie cutter" projects here. Everything was original. A few pieces of student art work were displayed inside simple frames. I thought that these children must have been very proud to see their work displayed in such a manner.

This first short hall housed the fifth grade classrooms, some first grade rooms, the cafeteria, and work areas for the faculty and staff. I retraced my steps and made my way through the commons area to the next short hallway. Here I found the gym, Art and Music rooms, and several classrooms for special needs students.

As I neared the gym, a teacher dropped off her students for class. They were met at the door by the P.E. teacher who gave them specific instructions on how to enter the gym. His directions were followed by each student. I heard other teachers as I passed by their classrooms saying "here are your instructions" or "what is your objective?". Everyone seemed to be focused on teaching and learning.

The long hall housed 3rd- and 4th-grade rooms as well as second grade, Kindergarten, and the rest of the 1st-grade classes. The walls were the same light color that covered all of the walls in the building. But they were covered with student work at every grade level. There were adjective posters, famous U.S. citizen projects, and creative writing assignments.

I observed one classroom's daily schedule which was posted on the door. P.E. was Monday through Friday. They had Music on Monday and Thursday. Computer class and Art were both on Wednesday. Library was not on the schedule and after discussing this with Melanie Gordon, I found that teachers did not have a regular, weekly time to visit the library media center.

Rather, they signed up for a 30 minute visit to the library and were strongly encouraged to collaborate with Ms. Gordon on the topic or subject matter for that class period. The assistant superintendent in charge of the libraries insisted that this plan was

followed in all schools. Classroom teachers were required to accompany their students to the library for any instructional time with the library media specialist.

When teachers signed up for 30 minute library periods, they informed the librarian what type of visit they would like or what kind of lesson the library media specialist should prepare. Classroom teachers could sign up for one or several 30-minute periods during the week. I investigated this concept of flexible library scheduling and collaboration during my research and reported my findings in subsequent chapters.

Kindergarten classrooms were located at the end of the long hallway. The rooms were situated in such a way that these smallest of Greenway students could come and go at their own pace. A set of double doors at the end of the hall led to the playground. I took the opportunity to look at this outdoor area before returning to the library media center.

The playground was divided into three distinct areas—grass, blacktop, and gravel. The blacktop area boasted basketball goals, hop scotch, and four square courts. Benches were located at the edge with a drinking fountain near by. The gravel area held brightly colored equipment for swinging and climbing.

Beyond this was a very large grassy area with tether balls near by and ball fields situated further from the building. The entire school grounds were fenced in with a tall, black wrought iron fence that seemed to complement the adjoining houses and yards. This reinforced the concept that Greenwood Elementary School was truly a part of the neighborhood.

Student learning and instruction was at the heart of all I saw during my tour of Greenwood. This was emphasized by the student work displayed, conversations

overheard, and instruction observed. The school reported that 45 faculty and staff work to support the learning of its 550 students (Kindergarten through fifth grades).

More specific student information showed that of these 550 students, 86.5 percent were White, 6.4 percent were African American, 5.8 percent were Asian, .9 percent were Hispanic, and .4 percent were Indian. Average daily attendance was 97.5 percent and students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals were 5.7 percent.

The ratio of students to regular classroom teachers was 20 to one. One hundred percent of these teachers held teaching certificates and were considered to be highly qualified. Seventy percent of them had earned advanced degrees and their average years of teaching experience were 9.9 years.

Not only did faculty and staff provide a nurturing environment for the students but the community did as well. Ninety-eight percent of Greenwood families attended parent-teacher conferences. The school boasted of an active Parent/Teacher Organization and parent volunteers participated in activities at every grade level and instructional area. Activities to reinforce or enrich learning were available during and after school as well as during the summer months.

Students were not the only people learning at Greenwood Elementary. Dr. Sandy Innes, Greenway's principal, informed me that all faculty members participated in professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004). Their placement in these communities was tied to personal interests and strengths. Teachers set aside one half day each month during the school year to meet in learning communities where they planned, learned, and implemented specific instructional strategies.

As stated previously, student achievement was the most important objectives at Greenwood Elementary School. Teachers, families, and community members combined forces to work with and support students. As a result, all students scored in the top two categories (Proficient and Advanced) on the Missouri Assessment Program.

Participants—Principal and Library Media Specialist

The purpose of my study was to examine the positive working relationship between an elementary school principal and the library media specialist. I found my participants in Dr. Sandy Innes and Melanie Gordon at Greenwood Elementary School. They both understood the importance and potential of the library media program and had worked together through the opening of two elementary schools.

Although Sandy Innes expressed interest in my study and a desire to participate from our first email contacts, it was very difficult to contact or meet with her. This may have been for several reasons. First, Dr. Innes was a very busy person. She was called away from Greenwood to attend district-wide meetings and serve on various committees. According to Melanie, this was because Dr. Innes was such a good principal.

Another reason I found it difficult to meet with this principal might have been because she was a very organized person working from her online calendar. Dr. Innes told me that she scheduled her time down to the minute realizing that she could not always keep that schedule. For example, when we met to schedule a time for our formally interview, she referred to her calendar noting that there were very few openings for the entire month.

The last reason Dr. Innes might have been difficult to contact was the school secretaries seemed very protective of her time. It was my impression that they screened

callers and visitors before allowing contact with the principal. This was probably because they understood how busy she was and how she tried to keep her time organized with a calendar of scheduled events and meetings.

I met with Dr. Innes one afternoon to make an appointment for our formal interview. I walked into her office through the door which was almost always open. There was a large table with chairs surrounding it to the right. Several large windows lined the wall behind the table. Dr. Innes' desk was to the left of the door and she greeted me from there.

The desk was L-shaped with room for paper work and her computer. One book shelf housed books and school supplies while a smaller shelf across the room held personal items like family photos. While trying to set an interview appointment, Dr. Innes referred to her computer screen. I was curious and found out later that she kept all of her appointments on the computer's calendar.

Sandy Innes was a small person with shoulder-length blond hair. She always greeted me warmly and smiled often. It was her habit to dress comfortably but professionally. Her attitude was as professional as her attire. For example, she did not speak or comment on the working relationships of other elementary principals and librarians.

Dr. Innes and her library media specialist, Melanie Gordon, had been working together for nine years. Sandy told me that the most important piece of a quality library media program was hiring the right librarian. She was confident that Ms. Gordon was the right person. "Melanie and I can have a two minute conversation and it can become something huge" was Sandy's comment about her librarian. In other words, Sandy

trusted and respected Melanie's ability to lead learning and instruction through the library media center. They could solve big problems or develop innovative ideas in a short amount of time.

All of their work together took place on the elementary school level. Melanie Gordon gave me further background when she discussed her experiences before moving to the elementary school setting. This information gave me a better understanding of Melanie's educational philosophy. Moreover, I heard why she enjoyed the ability to collaborate with teachers and what compelled her to provide a place for students to share and learn.

Melanie obtained her library science education because she wanted to prepare students to become lifelong learners. She began her career on the secondary level working two years in a high school library in Green Public School System. "They are too embarrassed at that age to say they don't know how to use the library" Melanie said. She realized that by the time students reached high school, their perception of libraries and what these places had to offer were set and it was too late to gain their confidence. "If you don't catch them in elementary school, it might be too late."

Moving to an elementary school library gave Melanie the opportunity to make a positive impression on the students with whom she worked. She explained that the library media center should be a welcoming place and she worked hard to eliminate the image of librarians as quietly working behind the desk and saying "shh" all the time. There was music playing in Ms. Gordon's library. Bright posters were on the wall and student art projects were frequently displayed along shelf tops and floor.

Melanie worked hard to build a feeling of trust with her students and teachers alike. She gave me details on how she went about doing this. She made students feel comfortable when they visited the library so they would want to come back. This was partially accomplished by her helpful, positive attitude. "I teach them to be self sufficient but I let them know they shouldn't be afraid to ask for help. I also let them know it's OK to talk in the library."

The librarian did not wear glasses or have her hair pulled back in a bun at Greenwood Elementary School. Ms. Gordon was a person of medium height with short brown hair. She was poised and confident in her approach to students and adults. Her manner was professional but approachable. She not only knew her students by name, she also knew their interests and abilities.

Melanie knew exactly what she wanted to accomplish and even had definite expectations and plans for the future. Teaching and providing up-to-date resources were the things that she wanted to do in this friendly, inviting atmosphere. Collaborating and working with her fellow faculty members was how she met her goals. "This is what we do here", Melanie informed me.

Initial Contacts

As described in the previous chapter, I developed a list of potential research sites with input from DESE and MASL. I selected school districts from my master list that would be within manageable driving distance. I compiled a master list prioritizing those names and school districts that appeared on both lists. Next, I sent emails to those library media specialists and administrators explaining my project.

I first explained who suggested their names to me. Then I provided them with my current status as doctoral student and an overview of my background as elementary school principal and library media specialist. I briefly explained my research project and asked for a response if they were interested.

There were areas of the state that would have been extremely convenient for me to visit. Those schools and personnel were missing from my list. A number of schools appearing on my list would have been within easy driving distance. Some of these did not respond to my requests. Others did reply and this was where I began my search for the appropriate research site.

Slowly but surely, the search for my principal and librarian began to narrow. A few contacts sounded enthused at the start but dropped out for various reasons (e.g., time frame, availability). Others simply did not continue the correspondence and there was never a reason given.

Green Public School District was suggested because one the assistant superintendents there had received MASL's Administrator Award several years ago. This person was exceptionally helpful and willing to assist me in my endeavors. She gave me the name and contact information for the school district's library coordinator encouraging me to make that contact. She also commented that she would notify the coordinator of my forthcoming e-mail or phone call.

Again, I provided my background information and reason for making my request when communicating with Green Public Schools' library coordinator. This person gave me the names of several elementary schools with principals and librarians having the

positive working relationship I was looking for. One school stood out because of her description of the situation.

The library coordinator told me about Greenwood Elementary School. It was the district's newest elementary school. She worked with the principal and library media specialist in establishing the library. She had also worked with them at a previous school. Sandy Innes was Greenwood's principal and Melanie Gordon, the librarian. The library coordinator was confident in recommending these educators to me because they both understood the importance and potential of the library media program.

I had found my research site—if principal and librarian agreed to participate. My first step was to get in touch with Dr. Innes and set a time to meet and discuss my research. She suggested that I visit them at Greenwood because both she and Melanie Gordon had some questions. We arranged to meet the next week.

Dr. Innes met with Ms. Gordon and me at the large table next to the windows in her office. I presented my proposal and they asked questions and even made a few suggestions. In the end, they both agreed to be part of my study. Dr. Innes even recommended that I contact their administration office to request district permission.

I began this process by talking with the assistant superintendent I had contacted at the beginning of my search. She informed me Green Public School's Director of Data and Research was the person I needed to talk with. This person informed me of the school district's research policies and emailed me the permission forms to complete.

I delivered the appropriate forms to the director's office along with a letter from Dr. Innes expressing her willingness to participate in my research. I had expected to simply drop off the forms and return at a later date. But before I left her office, the

director of data and research signed the forms and gave me a letter which entitled me to conduct my research at Greenwood Elementary School. Green Public School District had given me the authorization to begin my study.

Summary

Greenwood Elementary School was a new building filled with dedicated educators. Boys and girls filled the rooms and playgrounds eager to learn. They were all part of a school district known for its educational excellence as noted by Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The results, analysis, and implication of my qualitative case study are found in the remaining chapters.

Chapter 5

Results and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine a positive working

relationship between an elementary school principal and library media specialist. I used a

guiding question to navigate through the collected data. What does the school

community look like when the principal and library media specialist have this kind of

relationship?

In this chapter, I will report the results of my study. I will answer each sub

question with information from my data analysis. I will begin with the first sub question.

What specific elements are present in the school library media program? David

Loertscher's library media taxonomies are used as the conceptual framework guiding me

through the data. I will also consider components that may fall outside those taxonomies.

Next, I will examine and answer the second sub question. How does the

principal's and library media specialist's positive working relationship affect learning and

instruction at Greenwood Elementary School? After analyzing and categorizing, I will

organize my data into themes. Sorting through this information will result in a picture of

the teaching and learning environment that Dr. Innes and Ms. Gordon helped to create.

To help readers visualize the school community, I will describe an afternoon in the

library media center at Greenwood Elementary School.

As a summary to Chapter 5, I will use the results of my research to answer the

guiding question and relate the positive working relationship to the entire school

community. What does the school community look like when the principal and library

media specialist have a positive working relationship?

What Specific Elements are Present in the School Library Media Program?

Library media taxonomies are part of the library handbook distributed by DESE.

Principals and library media specialists use these as assessment tools for their library

programs or simply as guidelines. I chose to use the documents called *The Principal's*

Organizational Taxonomy of the Library Media Program (Appendix A) and *The Library*

Media's Taxonomy (Appendix B) to identify specific elements present in Greenwood's

library. I first provide a summary of the taxonomies and then single out the components

related to my case.

The Principal's Organizational Taxonomy of the Library Media Program is

divided into four levels: the basic library, the library media center as an independent

entity, the integration of the library media center into the teaching program of the school,

and the involvement of the library media center staff in curriculum planning. I found

evidence that Dr. Innes integrates the library media center into the teaching program of

the school and involves library media center staff in curriculum planning at Greenwood.

This evidence took the form of observations, interviews, and informal conversations that

I explore in the following paragraphs.

Observations indicated Greenwood's library media program has been integrated

into the teaching program of the school. This is the third level of the principal's

taxonomy. Teachers and students are expected to use the library media center. Joint

planning and professional development opportunities are also required at this level by the

principal. The size of the library media staff is sufficient to provide adequate supervision for instructional activities.

The library was available to faculty, staff, and students the entire school day. This allowed everyone to expand their use of the library media center. A library assistant had been assigned to the library media center by Dr. Innes which allowed it to remain open even during those times Melanie Gordon was not present. I also observed the assistant helping Ms. Gordon in a variety of library duties.

The assistant helped individuals and small groups of students with classroom projects and assignments. She also supported the librarian in lesson preparation. During one particular visit to Greenwood's library, I watched Melanie and her assistant prepare for a school-wide event called Science Expo.

I heard conversations about Science Expo on several occasions. It was obviously an important event at Greenwood. Melanie, her assistant, and the assistant principal had been talking about it one day as I arrived. While Ms. Gordon helped students select books for leisure reading, I asked her library assistant to explain this upcoming affair.

Science Expo is a content-related event that started at Greenwood. The school piloted the concept and it was later adopted by elementary schools across the district. All of the schools use this hands-on, experiment-driven occasion as an alternative to the traditional science fair. Students in Kindergarten through grade 5 are directly involved with activities that are tailored to their abilities and interests. All teachers sign up to conduct two science experiments, one appropriate for Kindergarten through second grades and the other for third through fifth grades.

The library played an active role in Science Expo. It was not just a place for classroom teachers to gather books and ideas for themselves. Melanie and her library assistant planned and conducted their own Science Expo activities. Melanie developed the concept and her assistant gathered the resources. Together, they prepared their science experiments for the children. On the day of the event, they incorporated literature, technology, and hands-on experiments into the library's Science Expo offerings.

The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss was the springboard for their Kindergarten through 2nd-grade activity. After listening to the story, boys and girls attempted to build a protective container for Thing One and Thing Two. They had a wide variety of construction material to use—construction paper, cardboard tubes, pipe cleaners, small boards—as well as glue, string, and other material to hold their containers together. Once built, they all tested their containers with the stuffed characters provided by Ms. Gordon.

Grades 3 through 5 took part in a bridge building project. They first watched a video clip provided by *United Streaming*, a video subscription service provided by Green Public Schools. After they viewed the video about some well known American bridges being built, they focused on how they might build their own bridge using 20 pieces of paper. Students used the library media center's SmartBoard to draw and manipulate their plans.

I also observed joint planning and professional development opportunities in the library media center at Greenwood Elementary School. This also falls into the third level of the principal's taxonomy. Joint planning and staff development were possible because of a district policy enforced by Dr. Innes directing elementary teachers and library media

specialists to collaborate on lessons. Sandy made sure that classroom teachers attended the library sessions they scheduled.

Because of this policy, Melanie knew what was being taught in the classrooms and the teachers knew what was being taught by the library media specialist. For example, I observed a conversation between Melanie and a classroom teacher regarding an upcoming science unit. They discussed an introductory lesson on magnets. When Melanie planned her lesson, she knew what part of the curriculum she was responsible for and how it fit into the overall science curriculum.

Finally, Dr. Innes expected teachers and students to use the library. As level three of the principal's taxonomy states, "the principal creates expectations that every teacher and student will use the library media center to good advantage." Sandy and I observed a second grade language arts lesson about adjectives. The lesson occurred in the library rather than the classroom and was taught by the librarian rather than the second grade teacher.

Sandy informed another teacher about the adjectives lesson Ms. Gordon had conducted. She felt this teacher needed only a little encouragement to take advantage of the curricular opportunities offered by the library media specialist. Later, Dr. Innes told me "teachers like to please the principal. So I let them know about the good instruction going on in the library and that it is an expectation of mine for them to take advantage of it."

Interviews revealed the library media center was involved in curriculum planning at Greenwood. This falls into the fourth level of the principal's taxonomy. Specifically,

the library staff was part of district curriculum and textbooks committees. Curriculum plans also included library materials, equipment, and space.

Melanie Gordon took part in writing the library media curriculum. This is a document used by library media specialists district-wide. It was adopted by Green Public Schools in 2002 and is due for revision in 2008 although all curricula are reviewed annually. Melanie stated, "even though librarians use content area and grade level curricula, we still have a curriculum specific to us."

The library media curriculum contains library-specific goals and objectives. For example, there is a list of library skills and the grades they should be introduced as well as example assessments. Melanie said the real reasons for the curriculum were to show faculty and staff how these library skills could be integrated into all subjects and also address state standards and expectations.

Level four also states that library media staff is included in curriculum and textbook committees. Dr. Innes made sure Ms. Gordon was involved not only in the library curriculum but in building collaboration as well. Melanie was part of the technology team at Greenwood and had served on textbook committees for various elementary curricula.

Sandy told me that Melanie was very good with technology and it was a priority for her to get Melanie the resources needed in order to be an effective and successful library media specialist. Ms. Gordon and her students used a SmartBoard in the library as a tool for learning and instruction. For example, I observed Melanie preparing a 2nd - grade math lesson in collaboration with a classroom teacher.

The lesson was scheduled for later that afternoon. There were several small groups of students working in the library and after checking on each, Melanie made her way to the SmartBoard to work on the lesson. She was using a book titled *100 Hungry Ants* by Elinor J. Pinczes. I watched as she typed on to the screen "100 hungry ants are on their way to the picnic. Put them in 1 long row of 100 ants. Remember to count by 5s."

In the middle of this preparation, a teacher came in to visit with the librarian about another activity. Their conversation lasted only a few minutes and was quiet and professional. When the teacher left, Melanie went back to the SmartBoard and her preparation—"Stop. We're moving too slow. Now make 2 lines of 50 ants. Count by 5s." When the second graders come to the library later in the day, they will not only hear quality literature but also a hands-on activity reinforcing their new math skills.

Teachers regularly sought out Melanie to help them learn how to use this tool as well as other technology in their own teaching. On the day I held my formal interview with the library media specialist, she related a conversation she had just that morning with a classroom teacher. The teacher came to the library asking for help with the SmartBoard.

As part of their learning resources, 4th-grade classrooms were equipped with several computers and a SmartBoard. One particular classroom teacher asked Ms. Gordon, "Would you come in and teach me how to use the SmartBoard software?" Melanie stated she had never been formally trained in the use of this technology but was in the process of learning as much as she could in order to use it and share her knowledge with the faculty.

Melanie had become so accomplished in the use of the SmartBoard as an instructional tool that she and another elementary librarian from the district were scheduled to present at a regional technology conference. One lesson that would be included in the presentation was one that she and the 5th grade teachers planned and used as part of their science curriculum.

In a conversation with Dr. Innes, she related an occasion when the 5th-grade teachers approached Melanie to help them plan a science unit on the solar system. The teachers not only asked her to gather appropriate resources on the topic but also asked her to help them incorporate the SmartBoard into the lessons. Together, they used this technology to explain rotation versus revolution and other topics that went along with their solar system objectives.

The library media center housed fifteen computers for use by students and teachers. There were two printers as well—one creating color copies for the entire school. Second grade teachers and Ms. Gordon collaborated to make sure their students had the basic skills to use computers productively. When small groups of second graders visited the library to practice spelling words, they knew how to use Microsoft Word and save their documents to their teacher's personal electronic folder.

I observed one group of students involved in just such an activity. Five second graders came to the library while I was seated at one of the back tables. They positioned themselves around the computers. Four worked side by side, not in pairs but close enough to check on each other's progress and choices. One student worked alone—until the library assistant sat down beside him to check on his progress and choices.

Following their instructions, these students chose how they wanted to practice their spelling words. They could type each word five times, use each one in a sentence, or write a crazy story including each spelling word. As each boy and girl completed the assignment, they named it and saved the document to their teacher's folder. They appeared confident as they used the computers for their work. This confidence came, in part, from the collaboration and planning of their teacher and Ms. Gordon.

Dr. Innes employed professional learning communities at Greenwood Elementary School. A professional learning community can be used by fifth grade teachers, a high school math department, or an entire school district. These groups focus on student learning in a collaborative way making sure that assessments are used to measure results (DuFour, 2004). Sandy used this concept to allow teachers to draw from their individual strengths and then share their experiences building wide.

She said each faculty member was expected to serve on a team and Ms. Gordon was no exception. As a matter of fact, Melanie was part of the technology team guiding the Greenwood Elementary School community in the use of technology as part of the teaching and learning process. So, Dr. Innes did not stop at simply providing Ms. Gordon with money to purchase appropriate technological hardware and software for teachers and students. Sandy implemented professional learning communities (and expected Melanie to take part) in order to ensure student learning, develop a culture of collaboration, and focus on the result—student achievement (DuFour, 2004).

The results of my observations, interviews, and informal conversations showed me that Dr. Innes was knowledgeable about the library media center. Sandy used the principal's taxonomy to assess the library and the part it played in the life of teachers and

students at Greenwood Elementary School. She wasn't satisfied with a basic library or even one that was vital and visible but independent of other school entities.

What made Greenwood's library stand out, according to Sandy Innes, was the fact that it was an integral part of the school's curriculum and instructional planning. This placed the library soundly in the top two levels of the taxonomy. She helped me understand this by comparing her school's library with the public library down the street.

"You know, the library down the road is a good reference place. It's a good place to get information and check out books. But the library in a school has to be part of that school entity." She further stated that the school library had to "interact cohesively" with every grade level with the school building: "It has to be a place where instruction happens…so that it intertwines with the curriculum, with instruction, with the students and teachers, with every grade level and curricular area in the school."

The Library Media Specialist's Taxonomy has 11 levels and is designed to assess the library's place in the school community as well as the librarian's role in curriculum and instruction. The levels begin with no involvement where the library is bypassed by students and teachers. The middle of the taxonomy describes minimal joint planning between teachers and librarian. The highest levels discuss instructional design and curriculum development where the library media specialist along with other teachers contributes to what is being taught in the school.

To help in my data analysis, I divided the library media specialist's taxonomy into five sections. Level one—no involvement—stood alone as did the second level describing the school library as a self-help warehouse. My third section included those

levels describing how the teachers and students used the library. These ranged from individual assistance to the planned gathering of resources.

I grouped the last two sections to correspond with the top two levels of the principal's taxonomy. The fourth section of the librarian's taxonomy included evangelistic outreach and collaborative planning. The fifth and last section included only one level which is the highest—curriculum development.

Observations, interviews, and document examination show that Greenwood's library media center falls in the top two sections of the library media specialist's taxonomy. Melanie Gordon reached out to the school community, promoted the philosophy of the library, and collaborated with faculty and staff. Furthermore, she was involved with curriculum planning and development at Greenwood.

The librarian's taxonomy described evangelistic outreach as a concerted effort to promote the philosophy of the library center. When I asked Melanie Gordon about her library media philosophy, she replied in this way, "it's supposed to be a welcoming place." She said she has worked very hard to dispel the image of libraries being a quiet place and librarians standing behind their desks saying "shh".

"I've really tried to get rid of that image. I always let them know that it's OK to talk in the library. So welcoming is the one word I would use." Ms. Gordon's philosophy of the library is summed up in that one word. She further stated she teaches students to be self sufficient but also wants them to feel comfortable asking for help. To encourage students and put them at ease, she always greeted them with a smile and a positive attitude.

Melanie Gordon promoted this welcoming philosophy to faculty as well as students. During our formal interview, I asked her how she promoted the library program among the faculty. Melanie indicated she talked to teachers and let them know what she had to offer. She talked about one occasion when she and a fifth grade teacher worked together on a lesson. "We worked together and she (the teacher) really liked what we did. So we let the other fifth grade teachers know that the lesson was available."

Melanie routinely shared with grade level teachers what their coworkers had done in the library. She also communicated her own lesson plans that complement classroom instruction. Melanie sent an email that told third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers, "I've just written a lesson on Internet usage so come check it out." The teachers visited with her about the lesson and when it would fit into their schedules. It was ultimately used by all fourth grade classes as they began research projects in Missouri history.

I found evidence that Melanie Gordon participated in resource-based teaching where the entire unit content depended on the resources and activities of the library media program. During my interview with her, Melanie described a fourth grade unit in Missouri history. "In fourth grade, it's huge", she said. "Pretty much what I do is teach."

All Greenwood's fourth grade students completed a famous Missourian project. They started with a lesson on biographies. Then the students learned about online databases. "Because they so often pick a person who is hard to find in books, it's hard for them to find information. So I try to help them by introducing online databases and especially the databases from our county library system."

Melanie and the fourth grade teachers encouraged students to get library cards. "Teachers have put library cards on their summer supply lists—what students need when

they come back to school. And that's a neat thing. If they have a library card, maybe they'll use the databases. Since kids want to use computers, let's teach them how to use it correctly."

Melanie described how she and teachers worked together to plan for collaborative instruction. This falls into the highest level of *The Library Media Specialist's Taxonomy*. As educators, they met to plan and structure what would be taught in the school. Melanie related her experience with the third grade teachers.

Third grade classes were preparing to conduct research. But before they began, they talked with Ms. Gordon. "That's where our collaboration comes in", Melanie said. "The teachers tell me what they want to do and we talk about how to go about doing it." The classroom teachers and library media specialist all contributed to the process. There were lessons on note taking and how to use the index of a book. These lessons occurred before the students ever visited the library.

Once the students were ready to begin their research, teachers requested as much time as they needed in the library. Some came for an hour, others a half hour. Some classes came to the library once a week and others came every day. The library was open for them to use as often as they wanted. But in order for it to be a successful learning experience for students, the collaboration component was a must. Melanie and the third grade teachers spent time discussing and planning instructional strategies before, during, and after this third grade research project.

Documents collected from Ms. Gordon also showed her library media program is directly involved in instruction and curriculum development. One particularly interesting document was the library sign-up sheet used by teachers when they wanted Melanie to

collaborate on a unit or lesson. I examined the sheet she gave me by counting the number of different topics taught during a one week period.

There were 14 different topics covered in the lessons Ms. Gordon and the classroom teachers taught in this particular week. One teacher came to the library three different times. His students were conducting social studies research. Other lessons ranged from science to language arts. This document was just the tip of the ice berg. A great deal of planning and collaboration was behind each lesson topic.

I also examined budget documents as well as a memo from one of the assistant superintendents directed to principals and library media specialists. Melanie's budget requests were instructionally sound and resulted from discussions she had with Dr. Innes. In her memo, the assistant superintendent gave four topics for the principals and librarians to discuss.

Following the guidelines of the memo, Dr. Innes and Ms. Gordon discussed library resources as they related to the school's enrollment. They also talked about improvements made or any that needed to be made. Together, they planned Greenwood's budget as it pertained to student resources. Dr. Innes told me Melanie was particularly good at making budget requests that were progressive and student centered, yet realistic.

For example, Dr. Innes stated Melanie understood budget constraints and how best to use the money available. "She makes sure the collection is up to speed", related the principal. Then Melanie prioritized other print and nonprint requests in order to make the library "more effective and successful for the teachers and the kids." Finally, this

principal and library media specialist documented the results of their budget meeting in order to share them with the assistant superintendent.

In summary, Greenwood Elementary School's library fell into the upper levels of *The Library Media Specialist's Taxonomy.* Melanie Gordon made a concerted effort to promote the library program. She was involved in instructional design and worked with the faculty and administration at Greenwood to develop teaching and learning experiences for their students.

How Does the Principal/Library Media Specialist Relationship Affect Learning and Instruction?

Before I can relate how this relationship affected learning and instruction at Greenwood, I need to give some insights on what this positive working relationship looked like. Therefore, I will begin this section by describing in brief the working relationship that Dr. Innes and Ms. Gordon developed over the years. I will target only those elements connected to learning and instruction. Then I will answer the sub questions by examining the collected data.

Sandy Innes and Melanie Gordon worked together for nine years. They served as principal and library media specialist at three different elementary schools in the same school district. Whenever Sandy was transferred to a new location, Melanie also requested to be moved to that same school. In all three cases, Dr. Innes was in charge of opening a new building and welcomed Ms. Gordon as the librarian at her new school.

Both educators spoke highly of the other during formal and informal conversations. "Isn't she great" was a comment used by Sandy Innes when speaking of her library media specialist. Likewise, Melanie Gordon told me Dr. Innes was a very

busy principal. But that was to be expected when "you have an administrator like Sandy. She is such a good principal." These feeling were shared by administrators outside Greenwood Elementary School. For example, the school district's lead librarian expressed her confidence in their ability to work together.

These comments were not empty or trite. Sandy and Melanie were not simply members of a "mutual admiration society." Their working relationship was built on trust, communication, support, and hard work. This became evident in my conversations and observations with each. "Melanie is the best librarian I've ever worked with." Sandy also told me:

> We have a very good understanding of each other. Melanie knows my expectations and she wants to meet them and do even better. She takes a great deal of pride in making the library the best it can be. So just having Melanie in the building gives me motivation.

Sandy further described their working relationship as having an almost "intrinsic" comprehension of each other. They could "have a two minute conversation and it [could] become something huge" is the way Sandy described it. Instructional needs and expectations were communicated smoothly and succinctly.

"I think having a good working relationship with the principal is huge." These were the words Melanie Gordon used when I asked her to summarize her experiences at Greenwood. Melanie's mentor librarian shared some advice with her many years ago about finding a principal who supports the library. "When you find someone who understands the library, you follow them. You stick with them whenever you can." So Melanie followed Dr. Innes to Greenwood. Sandy not only supported the library media

program but was vocal about that support among faculty and staff. "I want the teachers to see the library and the librarian as a resource, as a partner, as a place to go for help, support, or just to share something. Melanie does a good job at that."

Sandy Innes placed trust in her library media specialist. And in return, Melanie Gordon made sure Dr. Innes never had to worry about what was being taught in the library. Sandy put it this way, "I don't have to ask myself what the librarian is teaching, what the students are doing, or if the teachers are using the library. I don't have to think about it."

Behind this positive working relationship were two educators who trusted each other, supported each other, communicated honestly and often, and worked hard to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. How did such a relationship affect learning and instruction? Teachers and students received quality resources, collaboration was part of the school culture, and student achievement was at the center of teaching and learning activities.

Quality resources. Melanie Gordon provided quality resources to faculty, staff, and students at Greenwood Elementary School. According to Sandy Innes, "she does an excellent job of making the library a resource for the teachers—making it a welcoming place for them, making it a place they want to come, making it so she is a co-teacher with them…."

Resources come in many forms—print, non-print, technology, human. As stated previously, the library itself was considered a resource for Greenwood's students, faculty, and staff. But Melanie did not limit resources to the school building. She included

family and community members as important and appreciated resources available to students, classroom teachers, school staff, and administrators.

Melanie was responsible for reviewing and acquiring resources applicable to curriculum and instruction. She knew that Sandy financially supported the acquisition of resources. Melanie told me Dr. Innes put "her money where her mouth is" when it came to supporting the library. Sandy said that Melanie did a very good job of communicating what her needs and wants for the library were. "And she knows the difference between the two (needs and wants)."

Melanie Gordon also assisted teachers in the use of these resources. She acted as teacher, trainer, collaborator, and support for faculty and staff. When Dr. Innes stated Ms. Gordon did a good job making the library a resource, she could have added that Melanie was herself a resource for teachers and students in the teaching and learning process.

Collaboration. Sandy Innes expected her librarian and classroom teachers to collaborate. During my interview with her, Dr. Innes stated that it was a priority with her. She saw Ms. Gordon and a 2nd-grade teacher working on and presenting a lesson on Native Americans and encouraged the other teachers to observe what the two were doing. When she heard about some 5th-grade U.S. history lessons Melanie and a classroom teacher had prepared, Sandy reported the collaboration to the rest of the teachers so they were reminded the opportunity to collaborate was available. "I voice that out to the staff so they know it is an expectation of mine and I like it."

Collaboration could begin with a short conversation and continue for weeks. It could be a planned meeting before school or a quick visit in the hall. Joint planning

could start with a teacher request or a suggestion from the library media specialist. The bottom line is that collaboration was part of the school culture at Greenwood Elementary School.

I observed a classroom teacher conferring with Melanie during one of my visits to the library. A few students browsed for books to check out while a teacher assistant seated in the back of the library listened to a group of children read. Melanie worked at the SmartBoard on a 2nd-grade math lesson.

The teacher entered the library and went directly to Melanie. Their conversation was quiet and professional. The manner in which they interacted with each other impressed me. First, it reminded me of other occasions at Greenwood when I observed learning and instruction take center stage in even brief conversations and meetings. But more importantly, the teacher's demeanor displayed respect for students, Melanie Gordon, and the learning process. The teacher sought Melanie's advice on how to handle one particular part of a research project. They had obviously been planning this activity for some time but this collaboration lasted only five minutes and the classroom teacher was on her way.

During another visit to Greenwood's library, I found Melanie working on a plagiarism lesson for the fourth grade. She was seated at her computer behind the circulation desk. The library was quiet and there were no classes scheduled to visit. We spent some time discussing the purpose of the lesson and how it fit into the school's curriculum.

Melanie stated that 4th-grade classes were preparing to study famous Missourians and the plagiarism lesson was one of the first steps in their research process. She told me

she used this lesson last year but wanted to improve it and add some technology. She planned to use examples of unacceptable quotes and references and display them on the SmartBoard. She would then model changing the examples to acceptable writing and allow the students to do the same.

"I begin teaching these concepts in the third grade and continue through the fifth grade. We start simple and keep building on what the students have learned until they've learned how to paraphrase, take notes, and create a simple bibliography." In this way, Melanie collaborated over an extended period of time with several grade levels and numerous teachers. They found what worked, what needed improvement, and how to tie together grade level expectations making learning an ongoing experience for their students.

Student achievement. Sandy Innes and Melanie Gordon advocated the idea that collaboration impacts student achievement in a positive way. Melanie stated she was involved in what happened in the classroom and teachers knew what went on in the library. "The two are tied together and the bottom line is student achievement." She said they hoped collaboration would translate into better academic achievement for the students.

Dr. Innes confirmed her satisfaction with the collaborative instruction Melanie incorporated into the library media program. She further stated quality instruction increased student achievement:

Any time students can hear the message from their own teacher and the librarian, it increases their knowledge base. So the librarian can give that concrete

knowledge base that's needed for the little ones to build on and can add to the

knowledge base and problem solving skills for the older ones.

Sandy told me that she was confident that when students went to the library media center,

learning happened and student achievement increased. "Our library media program is

meeting the needs of our students 110 percent."

A review of Greenwood's 2006 Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) data

supported Dr. Innes' conviction. All third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students scored in the

top two categories (Proficient and Advanced) in Communication Arts. The same grade

levels scored in the Proficient category in Mathematics. Greenwood Elementary School

also met Annual Yearly Progress for the 2005-2006 school year as required by the federal

No Child Left Behind initiative.

Greenwood Elementary School's principal and library media specialist had a

positive working relationship. This relationship impacted learning and instruction at

Greenwood through the acquisition of quality resources, ongoing collaboration between

Ms. Gordon and classroom teachers, and exceptional student achievement.

What Does the School Community Look Like When the Principal and Library Media

Specialist Have a Positive Working Relationship?

My guiding question for this qualitative case study encompassed the two previous

sub questions. Specific elements found in the library media program as well as how the

principal/librarian relationship affected teaching and learning gave me a glimpse into the

educational life of Sandy Innes and Melanie Gordon. I also wanted to know about the

rest of the school community. What does the school community look like when the

principal and library media specialist have a positive working relationship?

So what did Greenwood Elementary School look like? What impact did the positive working relationship shared by Sandy Innes and Melanie Gordon have on the rest of the faculty, staff, community, and students? I saw teachers who viewed Ms. Gordon as an instructional partner and staff using the library media center as an extension of the classroom. Families and community volunteers were welcome and students were excited about learning and sharing.

Teachers at Greenwood viewed their library media specialist as an instructional partner. They knew she was dedicated to helping them plan, organize, learn, and teach. I saw Melanie meet with teachers before school, during lunch, and after students loaded into cars and buses at the end of the day. This did not include the numerous conversations that occurred throughout the school day.

Melanie Gordon was the kind of person who approached people with respect. Sandy Innes told me Melanie was great about talking with teachers. "She is very good at talking to teachers without making it adversarial and making them feel welcome in the library. There is an art to this and she is very good at that." I observed an instance when she approached teachers with a change in the library schedule without making it a negative encounter.

The assistant principal and library staff discussed Science Expo during one of my early visits to Greenwood Elementary School. This event took an entire day so regularly scheduled classes were cancelled and a special agenda was implemented. As soon as Melanie realized this, she took the initiative to inform the classroom teachers. She first walked from room to room explaining the schedule change as it pertained to the library. Upon returning to the media center, Melanie sent a school-wide email showing the

library's schedule for Science Expo. In this way, teachers were informed early and had

the opportunity to talk with the library media specialist about particular needs for that

day. They also had a paper copy to remind them of the changes.

Instruction was the main focus at Greenwood and Dr. Innes described her faculty

and staff as capable, competent, and excellent. They worked together well when teaching

and supervising students. On one occasion, Ms. Gordon and a 1st-grade teacher worked

with a class in the library. Their science lesson was about magnets.

When everyone was seated at the table area in the front of the library, Ms. Gordon

reviewed fiction and nonfiction books and then chose a nonfiction book to read aloud.

The classroom teacher asked questions as Ms. Gordon read. Afterwards, Ms. Gordon

showed the class a variety of magnets she and the teacher had collected. They also

conducted several experiments that were a big hit with the students.

Ms. Gordon displayed a variety of magnets for the children. They were able to

pick up and examine bar, horse shoe, and donut magnets. They also talked about

materials that might stick to magnets. They tried picking up paper clips, library books,

paper, an ink pen, and a ruler. The first graders were particularly impressed with

magnetic poles and the ability of magnets to attract and repel each other.

The children were well behaved—attentive, responding, seated at the tables. But

this did not mean they were all sitting silently and still. Some students had their knees in

the chairs. Others turned around in order to get a better view of the book and magnets.

Their behavior was accepted by both librarian and teacher. Ms. Gordon and the

classroom teacher were at ease with each other and the way they conducted the lesson.

During my visits to Greenwood, I observed teachers moving in and out of the library taking advantage of the resources available to them. They worked at the computers. They helped students choose just the right book. Most importantly, teachers viewed the library media center as a center for learning and instruction. Furthermore, they demonstrated a collegiality and respect for each other and Melanie Gordon.

One of the things I noticed when I first visited Greenwood Elementary School were the small groups of students and adults working in various parts of the building. Tables and chairs were grouped outside classrooms. Children and teaching assistants frequently worked in these areas. They could also be found in the cafeteria before lunch and in the library as well.

Second graders came to the library to work on the computers. A reading teacher brought her small group to sit in a comfortable corner and read. Two 5th-grade boys sat at a back table with a teaching assistant to catch up missed assignments. These groups came to the library media center when the area was quiet and they came when the room was buzzing with activity. They did not mind and neither did Ms. Gordon.

As stated earlier, Greenwood's library media center was a spacious area. It was designed to house at least 40 students involved in a variety of activities. There were two table areas for group work or classroom lessons. Book shelves were arranged throughout the library for easy access to even the smallest students. There was an area devoted to technology—computers, printers, and a SmartBoard. A casual seating area contained several comfortable chairs arranged next to a fireplace painted on the back wall. Finally, tucked in the back corner of the library media center was an amphitheater used for story time or guest speakers.

I observed the library bursting at the seams one afternoon. A 5th-grade teacher brought in his class to select mystery books. A teacher assistant sat with her group of fourth graders at the front of the library working on a Missouri history project. Several second graders completed a spelling assignment at the computers. To top off the activities, the entire 1st-grade population sat in the amphitheater to hear a gardener talk about fresh vegetables and healthy eating.

Melanie took it all in stride. In fact, she was pleased to have the library used for so many activities. Dr. Innes told me the library was designed for days like this. "There is space for more than one class to be in there. You could have a number of things going on and it wouldn't be too crowded. And a nice plus is that Melanie loves the library that way."

Family and community members were welcome at Greenwood. Volunteers played an important role in the library and school as a whole. Melanie depended on volunteer workers to be in the library when she and her assistant were unable to be there. She gave me a list of workers who came every week and said they helped to keep the library running smoothly.

I saw community members reading with students, mothers helping children check out books for weekend reading, and families sharing in special activities like Science Expo. Dr. Innes said these volunteers assisted students in the library and around the school on a daily basis.

The positive working relationship that Dr. Innes and Ms. Gordon shared had the biggest effect on Greenwood students. They benefited the most from the culture created

by these two educators. I saw this in the smiles and excitement they displayed every time they entered the library media center.

Melanie knew her student customers not only by name but by subject preferences. On one occasion, two tiny girls came into the library and giggled as Ms. Gordon greeted them by name. A little girl with pigtails came into the library the next week and promptly chose a book for checkout. Ms. Gordon took one look at the book and exclaimed, "A princess book. Why am I not surprised?"

Ms. Gordon was respectful toward her students just as she was with the faculty and staff. Students knew they were important to the librarian because of the way they were treated when they visited the library media center. One afternoon, a 5th-grade boy came to the library looking for an "award-winning book." Melanie happened to have a list of award winners on her desk.

Together, they thumbed through the list. Ms. Gordon periodically made comments about the books on the list. The boy asked questions about the characters, length of the book, or topic. Melanie talked about finding just the right book and trying a little bit before he checked one out. With just the right book chosen, the student checked out his book and left the library. Their time together never seemed rushed. Melanie never became impatient with her student. She acted like she had all the time in the world to spend with him.

Every time I visited Greenwood library, I enjoyed student projects that lined the shelf tops and spilled on to the floor. Dr. Innes called this "another calling card"— another reason for the students to visit the library. They looked forward to seeing their work on display as well as the work of their classmates.

On afternoon right before dismissal, a mother and two little girls came into the library. One girl was in third grade and she came with her mother to pick up her sister. Before they could leave for home, they stopped by the library to view the latest third grade art project. The trio spied a brightly painted clay frog. There were audible sounds of satisfaction. As they left the display, the mother spoke with Ms. Gordon about summer reading suggestions.

As I entered the library on one of my last visits, the entire front corner was filled with a replica of St. Louis. One Kindergarten class studied communities and built their rendition of the city. I recognized some of the shoe box and construction paper buildings and marveled at the aluminum foil St. Louis Arch. A class of older boys and girls entered the library and each student walked slowly by the Kindergarten project. It was a popular attraction for several days and another example why students enjoyed the library.

Students were welcomed whenever they came to the library and they could always expect as much help or assistance as they needed. When students came to the library, Melanie said, "I want them to have a successful experience and leave with good information. If they have a frustrating visit, they'll think libraries are stupid and won't want to come back or use the library media center at all."

An Afternoon in Greenwood's Library Media Center

I have described activities and events taking place in the library media center. Some were planned and some were spur-of-the-moment visits. Teachers and students alike moved in and out of the library on a regular basis. To provide readers with another picture of how the center was used, I have included one afternoon's events in Greenwood's library media center.

I arrived at Greenwood Elementary School around noon one day and checked in at the main office as had become my routine since beginning my visits. I walked across the entry way and entered the library media center. I went directly to the small office space behind the circulation desk to store my coat and bag. A 1st-grade class was busy checking out books. The library assistant was not present. I later learned that she was outside on lunch recess duty. While Ms. Gordon moved through the shelves helping students find just the right book, a volunteer sat at the computer checking out books.

While the 1st-grade class browsed and checked out books, two small boys entered the library pulling a red wagon behind them (this was one of the wagons I had noticed during my first visit to school). They found Ms. Gordon and told her their teacher had sent them to select some Dr. Seuss books for their class. Melanie showed the boys where the books were located and let them make their selections. She reminded them to stop by the circulation desk to check out the books before they left.

Most of the first graders had their books checked out and were gathered at the front table area. They were quietly looking at their books or sharing stories with their neighbors. When all but one student was seated, Ms. Gordon told the class it was time to hear one more Show Me Reader Award book.

This book award program is sponsored by the Missouri Association of School Librarians and is an opportunity for Kindergarten through 3rd-grade students to read or have read to them books from a list of 20 nominated titles. When the children have read or heard at least four of the books, they can vote for their favorite. Votes from schools all over Missouri are collected and counted before the winning title is announced. It is both

exciting for students and an honor for authors because the winning books are chosen by the readers themselves.

Ms. Gordon read *Rooster Can't Cock-a-Doodle-Doo* by Karen Rostoker-Gruber. The children enjoyed participating in the repetitive portions of the story. They also learned they had read eight books and would probably vote the next week. As the students lined up at the library door to leave, the teacher reminded them to give their books a hug and Ms. Gordon led them in the familiar back-and-forth chant I heard her use with every Kindergarten and 1st-grade class.

The library was quiet and Melanie moved to her computer behind the circulation desk. She had been working on an upcoming plagiarism lesson for only a short while when four older boys (fourth or fifth grade) came into the library. They told Ms. Gordon they wanted to check out books. They signed in and got a shelf marker from the bucket next to the desk.

This was routine followed by all students who visited the library on their own. Melanie kept track of all students using the library including those coming individually and not with a class as a way of documenting the library's importance. Students also knew about the shelf markers used in the library. These markers were about the size of a 12 inch ruler and were used to hold a book's spot on the shelf. Then students could replace the book in the correct spot and retrieve the shelf marker as they continued to browse.

The boys seemed to do more visiting than browsing but Ms. Gordon welcomed them just the same. Another boy, a 5th grader, entered the library. He told Ms. Gordon he wanted to tell her about a Mark Twain Award nominee book he had just finished. The

Mark Twain Award program is similar to the Show Me Reader Award but targets students in fourth through eighth grade. They talked easily with each other and before he left, they recorded which book the student had just completed and checked out another book for him to read.

At 12:45, the library was quiet again and Melanie returned to her plagiarism lesson. The volunteer shelved books in the nonfiction section of the library as the library assistant returned from recess duty and promptly left again to eat her lunch. Lines of students passed by the library door on their way to the cafeteria and two tiny girls moved quickly in and out of the library to retrieve a printed page from the computer area. I took this opportunity to talk with Melanie about the documents she had given me during my previous visit. Our conversation was cut short when another student came into the library looking for a Mark Twain Award book.

Melanie took her lunch break at 1:15. This time was set aside on her weekly schedule as her lunch time because it coincided with the return of her assistant from lunch. Having the library assistant allowed students and faculty to access the library even when Ms. Gordon was not there. Melanie was due to return from lunch at 1:45 when a Kindergarten class was scheduled to visit.

Since the library was devoid of any visitors, the assistant worked on a display for next month's special event called Reading Week. A 2nd-grade boy entered and sat at one of the computers. He looked as though he was having trouble concentrating on his assignment so the library assistant sat with him. Not long after this, a small group of second graders came to the library to also use the computers. A teacher assistant joined them and gave assistance when they needed it.

A Kindergarten class appeared at the library door at 1:45. Since Ms. Gordon had not yet returned from lunch, her assistant greeted the children and led them into the library. They took a trip through the shelves looking at the latest display of art projects by Greenwood students. Ms. Gordon joined the end of the line and told the Kindergarten class to check out a book first and then join their teacher at the front table area for an activity.

As the students found and checked out books, Melanie and the classroom teacher discussed an earlier project they had completed. They had used the book *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges, a photo essay about the experiences of the young girl who had been the first African American to desegregate an elementary school. This story made a lasting impression on the class and the teacher related a conversation she had with one student's mother about how the child retold the story to her family in great detail over supper one evening.

As the Kindergarten class lined up at the library door to leave, their routine was interrupted by a phone call for Ms. Gordon from a classroom teacher having trouble with a video clip she was showing in class. The assistant attempted to solve the problem but could not so she and the library media specialist switched responsibilities with the assistant dismissing the class and Melanie talking with the teacher about the video problem.

With the Kindergarten class gone and the video problem solved, I looked at the clock and found it was 2:20. Melanie turned on the radio to some quiet music, two students entered the library to use the computers, and a 5th-grade girl came in wanting an award winning book. The girl and Ms. Gordon browsed through a list of books. The

librarian made comments from time to time about books on the list. They talked about characters, plot, and themes. Once the right book was chosen, Ms. Gordon checked out the book for her student. The fifth grader exited the library content with her book and her library experience.

At 3:15, another Kindergarten class came to the library for a story. They also checked out books just as the previous class had done. Even though this class's visit was officially over at 3:45, they stayed in the library until school dismissal time at 3:50. This explained why they brought coats and book bags along with their books to the library.

Melanie was in charge of dismissal each school day. A very short time before 3:50, she made school-wide announcements over the intercom system. She accessed this from the phone on her desk. There were no after school events, so Ms. Gordon reminded students they should leave the building at their appropriate dismissal time. I found out that Greenwood Elementary School had no bells. So that day, as she did on every school day, the library media specialist dismissed students grade level by grade level.

After the students left, teachers used their time to reflect on the day and prepare for the next. The school district required faculty to remain 25 minutes after students were dismissed. Melanie met with a teacher briefly before she and I discussed the day's events. I left Greenwood that day at 4:20 and Melanie was still there.

Summary

There were specific elements in Greenwood's library media program that placed it very high when using the guidelines set by DESE. Dr. Innes and Ms. Gordon had a positive impact on learning and instruction because of their positive working relationship.

Overall, the entire school community benefited because Sandy and Melanie worked together to improve the student centered environment.

But there were two more components to this positive working relationship that I have not discussed yet. They were the opinions of the participants themselves. I asked Melanie and Sandy during their interviews if they had any comment they wanted to add about their library media center, their school, or each other. Each educator had a closing comment that summarized this positive working relationship.

Melanie Gordon stated that the library media program was successful because of Dr. Innes. "Having a good working relationship with the principal is huge" according to Melanie. She told me that she had worked for principals who "just don't get it." Most understand how a classroom works, but few understand the library and what it means to the entire school program. "So when I found a principal who understood, I decided to stick with her no matter what."

Sandy Innes took this philosophy one step further. She indicated having the right working relationship between the principal and librarian was critical. But the key piece was hiring the right library media specialist. "You could have a librarian with all of the characteristics we've talked about but if you have a principal who doesn't support that, then it just won't work."

Dr. Innes turned the situation around when she said "you can have a principal willing to do all the right things and have a librarian unwilling to take on responsibility and work with the principal." Her conclusion, and mine, was that "you have to have both pieces of the puzzle" in place for the principal/library media specialist relationship to have a positive effect on the school community.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine a positive working relationship between an elementary school principal and library media specialist. I identified how this relationship affected learning and instruction within the school community.

I chose one elementary school, Greenwood Elementary, with a principal and library media specialist known for their positive working relationship and an exemplary library media program. This case provided one set of experiences that was rich in detail. I considered any biases I may have brought to the research project but also considered my experience as both principal and librarian to be a unique addition to the study.

I conducted observations, interviews, and document examinations during my data collection in order to develop a rich and detailed case. Using these three methods of collection also allowed for triangulation. I also employed peer examination and member checking.

Data analysis was ongoing. As I gathered my data, I developed a coding system, searched for patterns, applied codes, and constructed categories and themes. I looked for information that would contribute to the purpose of my study and provide readers with insight and understanding. I interpreted my findings and recorded the lessons learned as I perceived them and allowing the opportunity for readers to draw some of their own conclusions.

In the remainder of this section, I will elaborate on the results of the study and their implications for education by using portions of Chapter 1 to help organize the results. Specifically, I will revisit *Statement of the Problem* and *Significance of the Study*. Finally, I will connect my study to previous research findings. In particular, I will show that my study adds to these findings in three distinct areas.

Results and statement of the problem. There were three issues raised in my statement of the problem. First, library media specialists are overlooked in the teaching and learning process (Roberson, Applin, and Schweinle, 2005). Next, negative perceptions and stereotypical images of librarians hinder their inclusion in collaboration and leadership (Hartzell, 2002; Lance, 2006). Third, some library media programs fail because administrators and teachers do not support them (American Library Association, 2006).

Roberson, Applin, and Schweinle (2005) found that despite a positive library media program/student achievement correlation, principals generally do not utilize librarians for student learning. I examined a school community where the principal utilized the library media specialist in teaching and learning. Sandy Innes expected her classroom teachers and library media specialist to collaborate on lessons and curricular events. Melanie Gordon met with Dr. Innes regularly to discuss instructional needs and how the library could play a part in student success.

Sandy stated that Ms. Gordon was part of Greenwood's professional learning communities just like the other faculty members and contributed to teacher training as well as student learning. The library media specialist at Greenwood Elementary School was not overlooked by the principal and instead played a vital role in learning and instruction.

Negative perceptions and stereotypical images of librarians hinder their participation in teaching and learning (Hartzell, 2002; Lance, 2006). I examined a library media specialist who worked very hard at dispelling those stereotypes. Melanie Gordon made the library a welcoming place where students and teachers alike wanted to visit. Students were not afraid to talk, laugh, or visit. They learned how to be self sufficient when using the library but were unafraid to ask for help when they needed it.

The principal viewed Ms. Gordon as a collaborator, teacher, and resource. Dr. Innes knew that quality instruction took place in the library even when she was unable to observe it first hand. Collaborative planning and teaching were expectations of hers and Sandy made that known to the classroom teachers. She depended on Melanie to provide quality instruction for students, needed training and support for teachers, and leadership in technology.

The main reason library programs fail is lack of support from administrators and teachers (American Library Association, 2006). I found the library media program at Greenwood Elementary School to be thriving. Dr. Innes was proud of the learning and instruction that occurred in the library. She encouraged teachers to collaborate with Melanie on lessons and gave frequent and specific examples of how this was accomplished. Sandy included her librarian in budget discussions and backed the library program financially. Likewise, Melanie was supportive of Sandy's efforts by making reasonable and educationally sound budget requests as noted by the principal in one of our conversations. Dr. Innes supported the library media program in her school, its community, and district-wide.

Sandy Innes faced the same issues that most principals face. She and other

elementary school principals are challenged to track student achievement and plan for

school improvement. Dr. Innes stated her most important task at Greenwood was

instruction. By studying the principal/library media specialist relationship at Greenwood

Elementary, I found Dr. Innes expected Ms. Gordon to take an active role in learning and

instruction. Studying this productive working relationship may give other principals in

the field valuable insight into how they can also meet instructional and administrative

needs in their schools.

Results and significance of the study. My case study was significant because I

approached my research not only from the librarian's perspective but from the principal's

as well and I used state and nationally accepted guidelines as my conceptual framework.

I found improvements in teaching and learning at Greenwood began with quality

relationships. Finally, I used my observations, interviews, and document examination to

tell the story of this positive working relationship.

Research exists relating how library media specialists could contribute to student

learning if principals would only utilize them in teaching and learning (Hartzell, 1997,

2003; Haycock, 1999; Lance, 1994, 2001). I examined the Greenwood Elementary

School community and how Dr. Innes utilized the library media program to enhance

student learning. I described the way Sandy perceived Melanie as an instructional partner

and her expectations of the library as a learning center. I utilized *The Principal's*

Organizational Taxonomy of the Library Media Program to frame my study.

The principal's taxonomy is part of state and nationally accepted guidelines for

measuring the use of library media programs in public schools. Using these policies in

my study makes it suitable for schools nation-wide as well as Missouri. The personal and specific experiences I included illustrate, from a principal's point of view, how a quality library media program can enhance student learning.

Barth (1990) stated school improvements should begin with the interpersonal relationships of those in charge of teaching and learning. I investigated a positive working relationship between the elementary school principal and library media specialist at Greenwood Elementary School. By spending time at this location, I witnessed conversations, planning sessions, and instruction that resulted from Sandy and Melanie working together to improve student learning.

This positive relationship and the dedication to student learning shared by Sandy Innes and Melanie Gordon is significant and worth telling (Lance, 2006). Dr. Innes worked very hard to keep Greenwood's focus on student achievement and she had an instructional partner in Melanie Gordon. Sandy's dedication and support empowered Melanie to assist in learning and instruction. Their team work brought reality to the possibilities written about in the literature. By reading the story of this relationship, educators could gain a better understanding of how to further student learning in their own school communities.

Results and previous research. My case added to the research in three distinct ways. First, I conducted a qualitative study which supported quantitative studies already in place about quality school library media programs. Next, I studied an elementary principal who perceived instruction as the librarian's most important job and supported that concept. Last, I researched a library media specialist who understood and accepted her role as instructional partner in the elementary school setting. The descriptive results

of the study showing how the librarian was empowered to support instruction, and carried her role in supporting instruction, may prove useful to educators and researchers.

Quantitative studies have been conducted in a number of states on the impact of quality library media programs on student learning. DESE and the Missouri State Library commissioned their own study in 2003. As in other states, Missouri's was a quantitative study with the goal of determining the relationship between Missouri school libraries and student achievement.

Lance (2006) called for success stories to be told about library media programs and their impact on student learning. My study told a success story by describing the positive working relationship of an elementary school principal and library media specialist in Missouri. The story of Dr. Innes and Ms. Gordon adds powerful images to the quantitative research already existing.

A research project called The Kentucky Study (Alexander, Smith, and Carey, 2003) found that elementary school principals rated learning and instruction low on a survey of important jobs for librarians. My study showed that Dr. Innes put learning and instruction at the top of her librarian's job list. She expected Ms. Gordon to take an active part in teaching and learning at Greenwood Elementary School and encouraged this stance through professional learning teams, faculty meetings, and personal conversations.

Library media specialists must understand and accept the role of instructional partner and communicate all the library has to contribute to student learning (Hannon, 2005; Hartzell, 2003). It is up to them to promote this role throughout their school community (Jones, Jr., 2003). Melanie Gordon knew she played an important role at

Greenwood Elementary School. She communicated to students and teachers what the library had to offer. Teaching was important to her and she sought opportunities to collaborate with faculty and staff. Positive things happened at Greenwood because Melanie, Sandy Innes, and the school community viewed the library media program as a vital part of teaching and learning.

Conclusions of the Study

I wanted to find answers to three questions as I conducted my research study. What did Greenwood Elementary School look like because Dr. Innes and Ms. Gordon had a positive working relationship? What specific elements were present in Greenwood's library media program? How did Sandy's and Melanie's working relationship affect learning and instruction? I will list my conclusions as answers to each question.

What did Greenwood Elementary School look like because the principal and the librarian had a positive working relationship?

- Teachers viewed the librarian, Melanie Gordon, as an instructional partner and the library media center as an extension of the classroom. She helped them plan, organize, and teach lessons. Instruction was their main focus.
- Ms. Gordon made Greenwood's library media center a welcoming place where students, faculty, and staff came to collaborate, learn, teach, visit, talk, and read. Melanie treated people with respect and people knew they were important to her by the way she treated them. Ms. Gordon knew her customers not only by name, but by interests and abilities as well.

- Family and community members were welcome at Greenwood Elementary School and in the library. They read to students, checked out books, and put them away when students returned them to the library. Volunteers assisted Ms. Gordon in the library media center on a daily basis.

What specific elements were present in Greenwood's library media program?

- The principal, Dr. Sandy Innes, expected teachers and students to use the library. Greenwood's library media program was integrated into the teaching program of the school. It was available to faculty, staff, and students the entire school day. Joint planning and professional development opportunities existed as part of the library program.

- The librarian, Melanie Gordon, was involved in curriculum planning at Greenwood Elementary School. Dr. Innes made sure Melanie had the opportunity to work on the district library media curriculum as well as district-wide textbook and curriculum committees.

- Ms. Gordon served on one of Greenwood's professional learning communities. Dr. Innes utilized Melanie's technology expertise on the school's technology team. Teachers regularly asked the librarian for help in learning how to use technology as teaching and learning tools for themselves and their students.

- Dr. Innes was knowledgeable about the library media center. She was not satisfied with a basic library. She wanted, and had, a library media program that was a vital and visible part of Greenwood's curriculum and instructional planning.

- Ms. Gordon promoted the philosophy of the library. She reached out to the school community in a welcoming manner that dispelled the stereotypical images of librarians.

- The library media program was directly involved in instruction and curriculum development at Greenwood Elementary School. Ms. Gordon was involved in instructional design and worked with faculty and administration to create teaching and learning experiences for their students.

How did the principal's and the librarian's working relationship affect learning and instruction?

- Teachers and students received quality resources. The librarian, Melanie Gordon, was responsible for acquiring resources applicable to curriculum and instruction and the principal, Dr. Sandy Innes, financially supported this endeavor. The librarian also assisted teachers in the use of these resources by acting as a teacher, trainer, collaborator, and colleague.

- Dr. Innes expected collaboration to be a part of learning and instruction at Greenwood. Collaboration between Ms. Gordon and classroom teachers was part of the school culture. Dr. Innes, Ms. Gordon, teachers, and staff conducted brief conversations as well as extended planning to make learning an ongoing experience for students.

- Sandy and Melanie advocated the idea that collaboration impacted student achievement in a positive way. Whether students visited the library or Ms. Gordon went to their classrooms, collaborative instruction was taking place and student achievement increased. The Missouri Assessment Program as well as No

Child Left Behind assessment and data supported their claims of increased student achievement.

I expected to include leadership as an important part of the principal/library media specialist working relationship. Participative leadership empowers teachers and turns the decision-making process into a group activity. By implementing professional learning communities at Greenwood Elementary School, Dr. Innes empowered her faculty to take responsibility for specific tasks and functions. She empowered Ms. Gordon to lead other faculty members in the use of technology in teaching and learning.

But what I learned from my study was that before leadership styles can be implemented in a school community, the right people must be in place. Sandy Innes and Melanie Gordon expressed the same concept to me in their individual interviews. Neither was present at the other's interview nor did they know what had been discussed. But they both related the idea that in order to have a successful library media program, you must start with the right people and the right relationship.

Melanie Gordon stated the library media program was successful because of Dr. Innes. Sandy understood and supported libraries and this led to a positive working relationship between the two. Melanie held the belief that principals like Sandy Innes were rare and made the decision to "stick with her no matter what."

Greenwood's principal took this philosophy one step further. She said having the right working relationship was important but the key piece was hiring the right library media specialist. Sandy Innes and Melanie shared a vision for the library media

program that had a positive effect on students, teachers, and the entire school community.

Implications for Future Research

What about demographics? This research was a narrow study involving one elementary school principal and library media specialist. My setting was an elementary school in a large metropolitan school district. My guiding question could be used as a template for further studies in different settings. For example, what would a similar relationship look like in an elementary school in a rural or urban school district?

The setting could remain the same but the participants could change. What if gender became part of the relationship? Or how might age affect the working relationship? My case study could be used as a springboard for a variety of studies based on demographic differences, each bringing a deeper understanding to that particular setting and relationship.

What about teachers and students? This study examined the positive working relationship between an elementary school principal and library media specialist. My study could be extended to investigate the positive working relationship between elementary school teachers and library media specialist.

Teacher morale was an issue that I considered examining during my study. I chose not to include it, however, knowing that I did not have the time to do that topic justice. David Loertscher's (2002) work also contains a taxonomy for teachers, so this could be an ideal tool to use in such a study.

Students could also be included in a separate study or in combination with teachers. Loertscher (2002) has a taxonomy for student use as well. It could be used to

examine specific elements present in the library media program when students and the librarian have a positive relationship.

What about other educational relationships? A positive working relationship between an elementary school principal and library media specialist has influences on student learning. Could the same be said for other relationships within the school community? How might such a relationship between the principal and school counselor impact student success? Or what if the relationship were negative—how might that affect student achievement and what could be done to remedy the problem?

Closing Thoughts

My case study included one set of experiences and perceptions. The findings could be used, however, by numerous principals and library media specialists to examine their positions and working relationships within their own school communities. As Robert Stake (1995) suggested, maybe other principals and librarians (or teachers or counselors, for that matter) will find some part of this study that is relevant to their own cases.

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Appendix A

The Principal's Organizational Taxonomy
of the Library Media Program

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Division of School Improvement - Curriculum Services
http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/library/index.html

1. THE BASIC LIBRARY
The collection, staff, and facilities meet minimum requirements for the state or
accreditation agency.

2. THE LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER AS AN INDEPENDENT ENTITY
The library media center is an organization with force, vitality, and visibility within the
school. The principal ensures that the following are available:

a. Materials/Equipment/Space
The best of a wide variety of media, computers, and information technologies are
available with supporting equipment and space. Standards are exceeded.

b. Staff
A sufficient number of professional, technical, and clerical personnel are available to
operate the library media center and its day-to-day services.

c. Resources
Funds are made available to build, maintain, and replace materials, equipment, and
facilities.

d. Access
The library media center is available for individual, small group, and large group use by
appointment and for walk-in service.

3. THE INTEGRATION OF THE LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER INTO THE
TEACHING PROGRAM OF THE SCHOOL
a. A climate for use
The principal creates expectations that every teacher and student will use the library
media center to good advantage.

b. The merging of library media center materials and teaching materials
Materials, equipment, and technology for the library media center are chosen to support
the curricular units being taught in the school.

c. Joint planning of resource-based teaching
The principal expects joint planning of resource-based units by teachers and library media center staff. Planning may range from simple gathering of materials to an elaborate instructional design of units of instruction.

d. Staff development
Opportunities for teachers and library media center staff to develop skill in working together and making full use of the library media center resources are provided.

e. Staff size
The size of the staff or the library media center is directly proportional to the amount of involvement in instructional units.

f. Monitoring
The principal evaluates student and teacher use oft the library media center, the library media center program, and the library media center staff.

4. THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER STAFF IN CURRICULUM PLANNING
The library media center staff participates in:

a. Curriculum change
The library media center is a part of the long-range view of curriculum change. The library media center staff is included in curriculum committees and textbook committees when decisions affecting library media center collections and services are considered.

b. Planning
Plans for curriculum change ensure that materials, equipment, space, and personnel in the library media center will be adequate to support curricular changes as it occurs.

Appendix B

The Library Media Specialist's Taxonomy

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Division of School Improvement - Curriculum Services
http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/library/index.html

1. NO INVOLVEMENT
The library media center is bypassed entirely.

2. SELF-HELP WAREHOUSE
Facilities and materials are available for the self-starter.

3. INDIVIDUAL REFERENCE ASSISTANCE
Students or teachers retrieve requested information or materials for specific needs.

4. SPONTANEOUS INTERACTION AND GATHERING
Spur-of-the-moment activities and gathering of materials occur with no advance notice.

5. CURSORY PLANNING
Informal and brief planning with teachers and students for library media center
involvement — usually done in the hall, the teachers' lounge, the lunchroom, etc. (Here's
an idea for an activity and new materials to use. Have you seen…? Can I get you a film?)

6. PLANNED GATHERING
Gathering of materials is done in advance of class project upon teacher request.

7. EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH
A concerted effort is made to promote the philosophy of the library media center
program.

8. SCHEDULED PLANNING IN THE SUPPORT ROLE
Formal planning is done with a teacher or group of students to supply materials or
activities for a previously planned resource-based teaching unit or project.

9. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN, LEVEL I
The library media specialist participates in every step of the development, execution, and
evaluation of a resource-based teaching unit. LMC involvement is considered as
enrichment or as supplementary.

10. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN, LEVEL II
The library media center staff participates in resource-based teaching units where the entire unit content depends on the resources and activities of the LMC program.

11. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
Along with other educators, the library media specialist contributes to the planning and structure of what will actually be taught in the school or district.
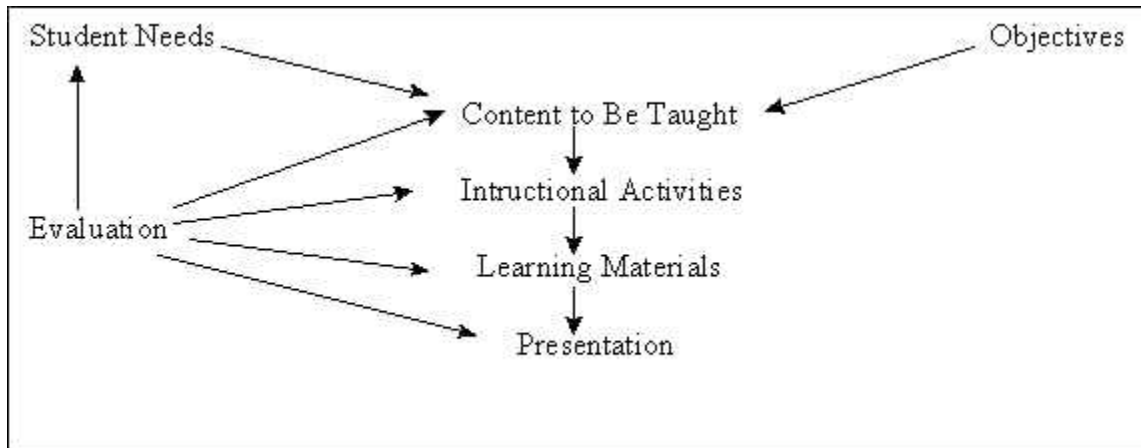
Appendix C

Principal Interview Questions

1. What do you focus on most?

2. What are your main distractions?

3. How do these distractions impact your ability to do your job?

4. How do you manage these distractions?

5. What makes your job harder?

6. What makes your job easier?

7. Tell me about your library (e.g., collection, staff, facility).

8. What are your expectations of the library media program?

9. In what ways would you say the library is an important entity within your school, and how do you help support its mission?

10. How does the library media specialist meet the needs of your building?

11. What part does the library and its staff play in the curriculum of your school?

12. What part does the library and its staff play in student achievement at your school?

13. What kind of collaboration, if any, goes on between your librarian and classroom teachers?

14. In what ways do you involve the librarian in school planning?

15. Besides what you've already mentioned, is there any other way you work with the librarian to improve the school?

16. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your position, the library, or your school in general?

Appendix D

Library Media Specialist Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your library (e.g., collection, facility, hours).

2. What programs and/or services do you provide for your school?

3. Do you promote the library media program and if so, how?

4. Tell me about your philosophy regarding student use of the library.

5. How do the teachers in your building use the library media center?

6. How and with whom do you plan or develop library program goals?

7. How do you collaborate with classroom teachers?

8. Tell me about a team or group project you have worked on and how you contributed to it.

9. How are you involved in instructional planning with teachers at your school?

10. What part do you play in student achievement?

11. What kind of curriculum work have you done in your building and in your district?

12. Have you served on any building or district committees and if so, what were they?

13. What part do you play in the use of technology at your school?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your position or your school in general?