

## INTRODUCTION

An esteemed paper on teacher professional development published 10 years ago in the Review of the Research in Education by Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle titled "Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities" which highlights how prevalent education policy-making stakeholders do not consider teachers the producers of theories or ideas about pedagogical practice, and certainly not of the policies that dictate the manner in which such practice occurs.

In response, Cochran-Smith and Lytle created a model "inquiry - as stance" as a new construct by which 21st century teacher professional development could inform teachers as both practitioners and producers of ideas about practice and policy -AKA "knowledge for practice" This paper represents my stance of inquiry into the profession of teaching as a library teacher. Specifically, this paper examines library teacher instructional development to discover how students can meet the American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in order to provide data so that existing policies on school library instructional programs can be enforced.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the necessary conditions for library teachers' attainment of master teacher?

What are the necessary conditions for students' attainment of library learning standards at a basic level?

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs auto ethnography, a type of qualitative research in which the researcher records and analyzes the actions of the research along with the thought processes behind the researcher's own actions and analysis. For the purposes of this study, the central questions engendered by auto ethnography are "'What are the consequences my story produces?'" and 'to

what uses they can be put." (Ellis 726) In the instance of my story as a public high school library teacher, what are the consequences of my professional development path and what do these conditions tell us about how to improve student learning? Especially in the context of how teacher training impacts student academic achievement.

The data set comprises notes from spring of 2009 through spring of 2010 taken from my professional experiences at a public high school during which time I collected information gathered from six separately taught units of twenty-one, fifteen, and three lessons in length aligned with my course of professional improvement using Robyn R. Jackson's method of mastery teaching principles and action plan.

## RATIONAL

In 2007, the American Association of School Librarians introduced the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner a collection of the skills, knowledge and conceptual understanding students must possess in order to become efficient and effective users of information. Kristin Fontichiaro in her 2009 work *21st-century Learning in School Libraries* refers to the AASL Standards rightly as a "blueprint" that will enable library teachers to become "an indispensable classroom partner." The publisher's back cover description poses the question begging to be asked, "But how do you make that blueprint a working reality?" Indeed, what are the barriers specific to information studies as a k-12 content area that impede this pedagogical imperative?

The content area of library teachers is quite different in nature from the traditional discipline specific content areas of our colleagues. As the AASL Standards indicate, the library as a content area can be described as the cognitive process of inquiry-based learning that uses information technologies and combines the discipline specific knowledge of information technologies with the meta-cognitive process of inquiry. The AASL Standards demonstrate

this comprehensive nature of the library content area that integrates the skills, knowledge, and conceptual understandings of information technologies through subdividing each standard into skills, dispositions in action, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies. For example, AASL Standard 1. Learners Use Skills, Resources, & Tools to Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge: Skills 1.1.8 Demonstrate mastery of technology tools for accessing information and pursuing inquiry; 1.2 Dispositions in Action 1.2.1 Display initiative and engagement by posing questions and investigating the answers beyond the collection of superficial facts; 1.3 Responsibilities 1.3.2. Seek divergent perspectives during information gathering and assessment; 1.4 Self-Assessment Strategies 1.4.2 Use interaction with and feedback from teachers and peers to guide own inquiry process.

The k-12 library curricula is a combination of the thinking process of inquiry using library and information technologies as expressed through a curricular subject area (history, social studies, biology, health, etc.) This demands collaboration with a subject-area classroom teacher in order to create the learning opportunities for students to gain proficiencies in inquiry-based learning and information technology. A way to frame library instruction in the k-12 classroom is to consider the way in which successful instruction by the library teacher as defined by students meeting library learning standards is contingent upon the the degree to which the library teacher can create a successful collaborative learning opportunity with collaborating classroom teacher. Inherent within this proposition is an expectation of the library teacher to communicate her or his discipline and related learning objectives to the collaborating classroom teacher whose knowledge and skills most often are limited to her or his own discipline. Further compounding this situation is the variable level of collaborating classroom teacher teaching proficiency. Thus the success of the library teacher in raising student achievement for her or his content area i in dependent on her or his ability to simultaneously raise the the teaching proficiency if needed of the collaborating classroom teacher. This imbues an element of adult learning proficiency not

heretofore made transparent in existing pre-service school library programs, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, AASL publications, regional or local rubrics for school library programs. It is this lack that this study seeks to address.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Keith Curry Lance director of the Library Research Service of the Colorado State Library is the chief researcher for studying student achievement throughout the 90s and into the 21st century across the country. Assisted by other researchers, his work identified the positive impact on student learning of effective school library programs combining teaching and learning, program administration, and access and delivery of information in six states in the first few years of the twenty-first century. These studies replicated findings from a similar study his research team conducted ten years prior.

Linda Wolcott published in 1994 "Understanding How Teachers Plan: Strategies for Successful Instructional Partnerships" finds that "School library media specialists may be only marginally involved in the instructional process because they lack an understanding of how teachers plan." This conclusion is irritating in that it does not position library media specialists as teacher but rather as outsiders to the instructional process even though her findings admit that teacher and administrative reluctance to see library media specialists as partners in instruction hinder successful collaboration. Wolcott does describe correctly how with the 1988 publication of the AASL's *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, the instruction collaboration aspect of the school media specialists role was established and promoted with this widely circulated tome; a forerunner of sorts to today's Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and accompanying professional guides.

Wolcott's recommendations that "[l]ibrary media specialists need to be active in

raising expectations about their involvement in the development of curriculum and instruction” by "appeal[ing] to [teachers’] needs." are echoed in research published today. Wolcott correctly defines the issue when she writes “[l]eadership begins with accepting and asserting the library media specialist's legitimate role in planning instruction.” Such recommendations posed a problem in practice, however, in that they place the responsibility solely on the library media specialists to transform the school communities’ expectations for library instruction. An impossible task depending on the circumstance.

“Toward a Theory of Collaboration for Teachers and Librarians” from the April 2005 issue of the AASL’s *School Media Quarterly* is Patricia Montiel-Overall, Assistant Professor at the University of Arizona–School of Information Resources and Library Science, effort to re-conceptualize what collaboration should refer to if we are to correctly understand how such process can fully impact student learning. Montiel-Overall describes how cooperative models of working together are confused with true collaboration and again situates impediments with library teachers: “SLMSs are encouraged to take a “leadership role” in collaboration by demonstrating a willingness to work with teachers or initiating collaboration.” Notably Montiel-Overall does make the following recommendation that “[e]ducation student teaching requirements should include time with the SLMS as well as with a master teacher” to foster better collaboration, which indicates that classroom teachers need instruction of their own to understand the importance of collaborative library instruction for their students’ academic achievement.

“The Impact of New York’s School Libraries on Student Achievement and Motivation: Phase I—In-Depth Study” by Ruth Small of Syracuse University published last year surveys 1600 classroom and library teachers on their perceptions of collaboration. Notably the pull-quotes from these surveys describe a low level of collaboration that specifically does not include assessment of

student work and note “the undertone of frustration” in the school media specialists’ responses:

‘Teachers do not plan with me, but simply drop off their classes and go. I do not feel that there is a connection between the classroom and library.’

‘Teachers are supposed to stay during library but often leave or do their own work away from the students.’

‘Teachers resist planning together and almost always ask, ‘You don’t really need me to stay, do you?’

‘Information literacy skills are taught to students but are disconnected from real learning due to lack of collaboration.’

Finally, Allison Zmuda’s 2006 article from *School Library Media Activities Monthly*, “Where Does Your Authority Come From? Empowering the Library Media Specialist as a True Partner in Student Achievement” bluntly addresses the frustration of library teachers:

There is, however, one fundamental problem that has existed for years and has frustrated specialists for years: How do we get the authority to teach students? The library media specialist must never sacrifice the opportunity to develop information literacy skills just to pacify or cajole a teacher to come to the library media center. Not only does this deference diminish student clarity about what research and synthesis involves, but also relegates the specialist to a supporting role instead of a meaningful partner in the professional learning community. Specialists must communicate the vision and expectations for student learning in the library media center so that teacher and student alike are clear on what is expected when they work in this environment.

## SUMMARY

In the fall of 2007 I received my National Certification in Library Media, Childhood through Young Adult from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. National Board Certification is the highest teaching credential a teacher can receive. The certification represents demonstrated achievement in what teachers know and are able to do with regards to students as learners, the subjects they teach, systemic reflection on their practice, and as members of learning communities. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010). In the spring of 2009 I read noted education specialist Robyn R. Jackson’s provocatively titled book *Never Work Harder Than Your Students and Other Principles of Great Teaching* published that year

by the Association of Curriculum Development and Supervision. At the heart of Jackson's book lies the question, "Is teaching a skill that can be learned at the mastery level?" Jackson thinks so, and her book is dedicated to providing teachers with seven principles of great teaching, an actionable inventory of teaching prowess among these principles, and action plan tools to enable one to progress through the teaching levels: novice, apprentice, practitioner, and master teacher.

Wanting to improve my teaching further, I inventoried my skills within her seven mastery principles (start where students are, know where students are going, expect to get students to their goal, support students along the way, use feedback to help you and your students get better, focus on quality rather than quantity, never work harder than your students) via a survey of forty-nine multiple-choice questions probing one's possible responses to a variety of pedagogical decisions (How do differentiate instruction? When creating learning objectives, how do you make them concrete? When you rewards students you...). I scored 154 out of 196 possible points which put me at the practitioner level, twenty-three points less than the minimum for master teacher status.

To progress Jackson recommends choosing two or three principles to work on at a time. Mine were: Principle 2, knowing where my students were going; Principle 4, using feedback to help me and my students get better; and Principle 6, focusing on quality rather than quantity. Specifically this meant moving from my present practitioner level of Principle 2, "Unpacks objectives but does not align all learning activities to these objectives or break them down into steps toward mastery" to the mastery level "Clearly communicates objectives to students and breaks objectives down into steps toward mastery" ; practitioner level of Principle 4, "Uses assessment to inform instruction but does not use it to provide growth-oriented feedback to students" to the mastery level "...provide growth-oriented feedback to students"; and finally, practitioner level of Principle 6, "Focuses on quality rather than quantity by making conscious

decisions about what students need to know, but attempts to teach all need-to-knows to the level of automaticity” to the mastery level “...making conscious decisions about what students need to know and how well they need to achieve it.”

When completing the questionnaire I reflected on three longer units I completed that year: a just completed three week twenty-one lesson project-based learning unit on financial literacy taught in collaboration with a licenced chemistry teacher assigned to teach economics as part of New York State’s mandated commencement year social studies program that consists of a term each in economics and citizenship; a fall term English unit for sophomores using inquiry-based learning to study censorship; and a fall term inquiry-based learning unit on research topics in Economics. All three projects produced a tremendous level of resistance from students that I concluded was generated in part by not clearly communicating the learning objectives and by not prioritizing the learning objectives carefully enough. Both projects were entirely created by myself and explained to the collaborating teachers. In the second instance the teacher and I split the class so we independently taught two smaller groups each for half the marking period. In the first instance I explained and demonstrated the curriculum to the cooperating teacher who incorporated her own choice of an outside cultural organization whose complimentary unit on the film “Goodnight and Goodluck” fit the censorship theme.

Notable about these two instance of collaborative teaching were the supportive nature of the collaboration. In the first instance the teacher added in her own curricular interests and her knowledge of a wide-range of teaching styles and pedagogical methods enabled her to adapt and support the student-centered approach of inquiry-based learning. In the latter instance the cooperating teacher and I ran on parallel tracks that allowed each the freedom to teach without the potential obstacles inherent in face-to-face cooperative team teaching. In short, both units were extremely successful, and the main point of improvement noted was overcoming student



resistance to new and unfamiliar forms of learning (all electronic, independent self-assessment).

The work with the teachers was fine, in each instance we were on the same page more or less and could resolve classroom based issues easily and with relative success.

That spring I also tried unsuccessfully to collaborate on a research unit with a social studies teacher that was ended mutually after two or so lessons. I worked with her, delivering a curriculum outline and began to go over individual lessons, incorporating activities and objectives I did not agree with, but in the spirit of cooperation included. I couldn't think of how to explain the pedagogical difficulties with her trajectory in a way that would be respectful, but still assertive enough to remedy the lack of scaffolding her methods presented. She had about a third of the overall teaching experience I had, with a self-proclaimed dismissiveness about K-12 pedagogy. I specifically requested of her to be an active engaged partner in the lessons and warned her that when students see that their teacher is not an actively engaged in the lesson, it emboldens them to disengage from the work. During our final lesson she began to go through her email as I began the lesson, students were resistant and began acting out and I turned the class back to her and our partnership ended that day.

This year brought an on-going series of problems: a teacher who began to grade papers as I taught the lesson, a teacher who sat in a corner of the library and read, and a teacher who refused to play an active part in managing the student behavior of the class. In all instances the teachers displayed resistance: telling me at the last minute that they wanted to bring in a class; refusing to accept certain instruction ("I don't want a class on how to do a bibliography, my kids need time to do research."); not following the agreed upon lesson activities (turning what was to be a quick go-round into a long discussion or interjecting another set of discussion points); refusing to actively manage their students behavior, etc. This made my action plan of instructional improvement difficult if not impossible.

Also compounding my difficulties was the realization that when working with a teacher the main concern was that I supply the curriculum for a newly developed course and that the inquiry-based methods of instruction that included a range of self-assessment activities and the use of student-centered instructional techniques (creating a list of student understandings that could be discussed by the students - when asked if they could add their own the answer from their teacher was no). The classes we taught had extreme behavioral problems, non-stop talking, anger management issues, etc. The collaborating teacher refused to take lesson time to create accountability rubrics and review classroom standards of behavior - and connecting those to assessments on the quality of the work, etc. This teacher had about a third of the teaching experience as I had (although we both attended a workshop together on collaboration for library teaching and learning) and I began to disengage myself from the project, merely supplying the curriculum and leaving the assessment of work and grading up to her. My efforts to complete Jackson's action plan of professional improvement at this point were completely jettisoned. I stopped my active teaching duties and spent my teaching time in open-access periods where individual students came to the library to work on projects assigned solely by their classroom teacher.

During this period I did propose and produced a professional development workshop that attempted to demonstrate inquiry-based teaching and learning aligned to the new AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (my second workshop using the new standards, the first was in the fall the school year prior) that uses graphic organizers to document independent research and/or information gathering. The workshop was structured to immerse the participants in the activities of inquiry-based learning as they planned their spring curriculum as opposed to a lecture-demonstration style format. The workshop format I used involved a brief mini-lesson on the stages on inquiry, with the bulk of the time allowed the participants to explore and choose

among the graphic organizers that were presented alongside the standards and demonstrations of student learning objectives they specific organizers met. In this way, the teachers could select items to use in their lessons with a transparent idea about how this activity meets a particular standard and captures a specific learning objective. After some time in independent practice, we re-grouped and used a discussion-protocol that allowed teachers to share their work, practice active listening, and receive feedback in an objective manner (“I noticed..., I wondered...).

## CONCLUSIONS

Zmuda’s observation that in order to truly impact student learning “[s]pecialists must communicate the vision and expectations for student learning in the library media center so that teacher and student alike are clear on what is expected when they work in this environment” accurately identifies the main barrier to the successful collaboration that truly improves student academic achievement through engagement with library instruction. In my case, my efforts to improve my teaching did accurately diagnose part of the barrier in terms of recognizing a need to improve my clarification of learning objectives for both students and classroom teachers. However, my efforts fell short in that besides the professional development workshop, I was unable to clearly “communicate the vision and expectations for student learning in the library media center” when I worked with individual teachers when such work included teacher resistance to either my role as full instructional partner or to the library as a content area of instruction, or both. Not anticipating this resistance and lacking the administrative support that clarifies the role and expectations for student learning in the library at the school level (this information exists at the district and state level, but without enforcement at the school such documents are practically worthless) dooms such collaboration to failure. Professional development support for library teachers as well as preservice education must include specific instruction in adult learning to overcome resistance and to better clarify library collaborative teaching and learning. Although there exists many papers and books identifying models of

collaboration, all fall short in addressing or even identifying teacher resistance as a factor that impedes such collaborative work. Until the education community agrees to name this problem and seek to address it, our students will not receive the benefit of proper instruction in information technologies at a time in history when technological advancements in electronic content delivery systems demand information skills, knowledge and conceptual understandings heretofore only dreamed of.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### NATIONAL POLICY

National Center for Education Statistics, United States Department of Education, reclassify library teachers as instructional staff, not support staff.

Student teaching experiences include a collaboratively planned unit aligned with necessary subject area standards and the Standards for 21 Century Learners as part of teacher training programs.

Professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English and the American Association of School Librarians plan for attainment of 21 Century Learning Skills and the teaching and learning necessary to meet those standards.

### LOCAL POLICY

NYCDOE include Library as part of the curricular subject areas in all materials for public and education community.

Portfolio-based assessment for demonstration of achievement in Standards of 21 Century Learners and New York State Standards for Digital Learners for grades 5, 8 and 12.

Literacy coaches trained to assist in collaboration between classroom and library teachers in order to assist students to meet AASL Standards for the 21-st Century Learner as well as subject-specific standards.