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Show Up

David V. Loertscher and Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux

In this issue there are many examples of professionals showing up to help make the world of teaching and learning a better place. These professionals have not let missteps, controversies, or major or minor glitches change their vision toward improvement.

It may be that you can't complete everything you want in a preferred time-frame or even that in the future it will become whole. But initial and succeeding steps are the beginning. Take time to explore some of the issues these professionals put before us in this issue, and be aware that that they aren't necessarily presenting the whole story, perhaps a work-in-progress. Understand that, despite their own doubt about how to move forward, they did.

Kumasi takes us to a book club started to encourage connections to the academics, interests, and cultures of peer groups. Library services for this book club look quite different from traditional library services and how book clubs usually work.

Hyman and Bentheim take us through the evolutions of different Learning Commons, and address many of the challenges they have encountered along the way. Yes, they are well on their way (and some would say "there") but they see more challenges and indications there is more work to do. Marc Ray, in his "Advocacy" column suggests that failure is another learning experience and not one necessarily to leave behind.

Partnerships between public and school libraries are happening, many out of necessity, as student options for libraries diminish and funding continues to challenge everyone. Wilson (public) and Ellis (school) describe their extraordinary and valuable collaboration, focusing ultimately on the end-user.

There are many ways to engage learners in learning: Crompton talks about how his project engages students in creating and using hypertext novels. McEwen, in his comical manner, talks about the book battle – something most professionals are well aware of. The tips and tactics article talks about an iTeam created as a peer coach opportunity. Robinson talks about how to

The Possible Is Now

The CCSS Moves Librarians to the Center of Teaching and Learning

Kathryn Roots Lewis and David V. Loertscher

Webinar Available from AASL: http://www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/achieve-ccss or at: http://tinyurl.com/m5qulbp

Editor's Note: Portions of this article were reprinted with the permission of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) from the action brief developed by AASL and Achieve titled, *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The Role of the School Librarian.*

When we read "*The Power of (in) the (Im)possible: Principles of the Possible*" by Ross J. Todd in the December, 2013 issue of *Teacher Librarian*,[1] we enthusiastically agreed that NOW is the possible for school librarians. If there ever was a future for school librarians, it is most certainly now. Our excitement about the role of school librarians is reflected everywhere in the literature right now -- the tide seems to be turning. As we have discussed the future of our profession, we are both energized and motivated by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as a driving force in skyrocketing the role of the school librarian and making the school library, the center of teaching and learning.

Just by taking a casual glance at the standards, you can see the possibilities: research, reading, information, writing, text, technology; prominent words in the standards are all part of a librarian's repertoire. But one needs more than a casual glance to integrate the standards, one needs strategies and a deep study of the standards themselves.

We propose a series of ten initiatives that will push your library to the very center of learning and elevate your role as your school's CCSS possibility. These ten initiatives are outlined in a new action brief released as "*a joint effort of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and Achieve in support of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) designed not only for school librarians*

who are supporting higher standards for student learning, but also for school leaders as they rethink and re-envision the role that the library can and should play in a major school improvement initiative.*" The ten specific initiatives are recommended because of their potential to make an impact on teaching and learning in a CCSS environment. The action brief provides action steps and specific examples similar to the ones in this article to help librarians and school leaders work together to articulate and define the role of the school librarian. The action brief titled *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The Role of The School Librarian* is available free at the Achieve site and the AASL site.[2]

Let's take a look at how the ten initiatives are being implemented in libraries across the country and how they support the CCSS. In addition we will suggest how you and your colleagues can add to a depository of new initiative strategies. How do these initiatives look at each school level?

First, let's consider the commonalities in the physical space itself. As we walk through each level of the library, we immediately see a library / learning commons --a safe, vibrant, energized, information-rich environment. These are simply magical spaces where students and teachers explore, imagine, daydream, calculate, inspire, be inspired, reflect, contemplate, discuss, debate, collaborate, research, create, innovate, think, seek, and learn. Libraries are simply magical places for children and adults alike. In a library, the list is limitless. As we walk through these libraries we also see maker spaces, where students (and faculty) can create and innovate with the tools they need and information readily available to help them with their invention, creation, or innovation. Flexibility is everywhere. Furniture and technology are meant to be moved, to be redesigned depending on the task at hand. The space is truly fluid just like the activities that happen there. In other words, the activity dictates the design each and every minute.

The thing that is different in each space we visit is what's happening there. Let's look at each initiative at different levels. We will start with initiatives 1 and 2 which go hand in hand:

INITIATIVE 1: BUILDING READING, WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS TOGETHER ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

INITIATIVE 2: BUILDING APPRECIATION OF THE BEST LITERATURE AND INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS TOGETHER ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AS A PART OF A LITERATE CULTURE

• In an elementary faculty meeting, teachers expressed interest in creating more speaking and listening activities for students based on the range of speaking and listening tasks defined in the

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1 Todd, Ross. "The Power of (in) the (Im)possible," *Teacher Librarian, December,* 2013, p. 8-15.

2 *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The Role of The School Librarian Action Brief* is available at the Achieve site at http://www.achieve.org/publications or at the American Association for School Librarians site at http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/resources.

CCSS. The librarian collaborated with classroom teachers to include a listening and speaking component in all units. So, for example, the librarian and the 2nd grade teachers decided to use a speaking and listening activity where one group of students created questions about the topic being discussed in class, while the other group of students answered the questions using ground rules for class discussion that the 2nd graders had agreed upon. The ground rules included taking turns, listening with respect, and responding appropriately. After some practice, the teacher and librarian decided to try this activity with another second grade. Using Skype to partner with the other class, all students were able to practice creating questions, listening, and speaking. Not only did this activity help students practice speaking and listening, but it also permitted the educators to check the students' understanding of the content and their ability to create questions.

• In support of a study on genres in the third grade, the librarian invited faculty members to read award-winning books in a variety of genres. Then the librarian invited all the third-grade classes to participate in a "read-around". The students were divided into small groups of four to five students. They rotated from one teacher to another to hear a short book review about the book the teacher read. After all students rotated through all the stations, they went back to their classroom and worked in pairs to complete a Google form that asked them to identify the genre of each of the books reviewed. After students completed the form, the teacher shared results and students discussed the results. Then students voted on which of the books they wanted the teacher to read to the class as a group. This activity helped build appreciation of all genres across the curriculum.

• When high school teachers expressed interest in meeting the 9th10th grade CCSS ELA standard centered on students being able to read and comprehend informational texts, the high school librarian suggested the creation of an online book club where 9th and 10th graders could gain more familiarity with narrative nonfiction. The librarian worked with a small group of student volunteers to create book trailers for a number of narrative nonfiction books. These trailers were posted on the library's virtual commons site. Students then selected their books using the book trailers as their guides. The librarian created an Edmodo site organized by the specific books where students, teachers, and the librarian could post comments and discussions about their respective books. This project generated broad interest in nonfiction and lively discussion around a variety of topics the books covered. Some students joined several groups. Note: The discussion forum in MOODLE could be used for this activity for younger students.

Let's move to Initiatives 3 and 4 which focus on school culture, research, and collaborative learning.

INITIATIVE 3: CREATING A SCHOOL-WIDE PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

INITIATIVE 4: BUILDING CO-TAUGHT RESEARCH PROJECTS IN BLENDED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

• A goal of the high school United States history teachers and the school librarian was to make the research process more authentic for students. They wanted students to become researchers. The collaborative team decided that the high school students would transform their more traditional yearly projects by creating authentic research opportunities. The students were studying the Civil War and were interested in learning more about the conditions and activities at the present-day site of Civil War battlefields. The students created questions they wanted to ask students who lived near these sites. The librarian found teachers and librarians in these communities and the students there had to learn about the battlefield in their own community in order to be prepared to respond to the students' questions. The students who were asking the questions prepared by first researching the battle, then they prepared interview questions for the group of stu-dents in the battlefield community. The students collecting the research had to identify which battlefield site they were inquiring about. In addition to questions about the battlefields, students from all groups began to ask other questions about each other's local history. The librarian arranged for students to collaborate using a service such as Skype or Google Hangouts. Their authentic research became part of their yearly Civil War unit.

• As teachers began to talk about the Common Core State Standards and the use of complex text, both literary and informational, they expressed a desire to have more opportunities to look at, read, and review a variety of texts of all types. The librarian suggested an after-hours text discussion, similar to a book discussion group or book club. Teachers were responsible for bringing a different type of document appropriate to their curricular area and standards each month and discussing why and how they might use it. For example, the first month they discussed primary documents; the second, informational texts; and the third, databases. The group discussed text complexity and curriculum possibilities. This meeting fostered several co-teaching opportunities for teachers and the librarian. It also allowed teachers to share many resources over the course of the year.

Let's move to the next initiative and how it looks in action:

INITIATIVE 5: PROMOTING INTERDISCIPLINARY REAL PROBLEMS, PROJECTS AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RICH INFORMATION RESOURCES AND USEFUL TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

• Elementary students are encouraged in the CCSS to pay attention to all kinds of writing materials, including explanations and information that examine a topic and convey ideas and information. During the school's collaborative planning time, the fourth grade teachers discussed their desire to have students solve a problem by creating an invention that would solve the

problem. Out of that planning came a coordinated effort to have students work in pairs to research their problem. Then each pair of students used the library's makerspace to invent their solution. The student pairs shared how their invention worked and their creative process with other students in a Google Doc. Students then analyzed each invention and made comments about the accuracy of the descriptions in Google Docs. After this peer editing, students adjusted their explanations to make them clear and concise. The teachers and librarian decided to culminate the invention unit with a maker fair at the local public library on a Saturday morning that let students demonstrate how their invention worked and how it was created and to display their writings that clearly explained their invention and their work process. Parents loved seeing and hearing about the students' work.

• The CCSS notes that through extensive reading from diverse cultures, students gain cultural as well as literary knowledge. In a French language immersion school, second graders were reading aloud picture books in both French and English. The children began asking the librarian many questions about what 2nd grade was like in France. Talking with the classroom teacher, the two adults thought that maybe they could find a classroom in France with which to collaborate. Using a resource at the local university, the librarian found a second grade class in France that wanted to meet virtually every week to read a story back and forth using Skype. The students loved this activity and learned a lot about the French culture as the students began to ask questions about one another's schools. This extended into more than just sharing stories and information about school but also about each other's customs. Not only was this a good way to practice language skills but it also fit into the social studies and reading curriculum.

• Ninth grade language arts and social studies teachers expressed an interest in having students conduct sustained research projects identified in the CCSS to answer a question or solve a problem while demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. The high school librarian suggested that students investigate a problem

in their local community. The librarian helped pairs of students identify problems in the community by providing resources: city council transcripts, local newspapers, and demographic information. The librarian then asked the students to research their topic as it related to their community. As they researched, students were asked to identify and prepare questions for a person from the community about their topic. Students then interviewed a community member. The responses from the interviews were used in their research. The pairs of students used Google Docs to collaboratively prepare their research papers and peer edit them as they proceeded. Students were asked to formulate a possible solution to the problem they had identified. After all research was complete, each pair of students shared their findings and their solutions. Community members including city council members and the mayor were invited to and attended the final presentations.

The next initiative focuses on using technology for teaching and learning.

INITIATIVE 6: USING TECHNOLOGY TO BOOST TEACHING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

• As seventh-grade students began a complex research project, the middle school librarian noticed that she was being asked many questions about the process and resources that were similar in nature. Many of the questions were about process or procedures. The librarian decided to create short videos and post them on her virtual learning commons site so students could easily and quickly get the help they wanted. Some of her videos were simply demonstrations of how to login to a specific database and how to use its specialized and advanced search tools, while others were more complex. This flipped learning model helped students have access to information 24/7.This strategy also freed up the librarian to help students with more complex research issues.

• When school administrators began to consider how students could collaborate on learning projects more easily, the librarian

suggested implementing Google Docs. The librarian trained teachers and then all of the students. Students learned how to share their work with other students and teachers. They began using Google Docs to work collaboratively and to peer edit. Teachers found that through collaborative work the quality of student work improved and levels of understanding around a topic increased.

Let's consider how initiatives 7 and 8 impact the creation of a school climate where opportunities for cultural experiences, innovation and experimentation abound.

INITIATIVE 7: CREATING CULTURAL EXPERIENCE ACROSS THE SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, AND ACROSS THE WORLD

INITIATIVE 8: FOSTERING CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, PLAY, BUILDING, AND EXPERIMENTATION

• Fourth-grade teachers were discussing with their librarian how to helps students learn about explorers and their travels. They also wanted to incorporate CCSS research and inquiry skills, including having students find textual evidence as they researched. The teacher and librarian explained to the students that after their research of the explorers was complete, the class would Skype with another class also studying explorers. Students would be asked to guess each other's explorers. The class would only be allowed to ask each other yes and no questions that pertained only to the explorers and could not use any part of the explorer's name. The teacher and librarian explained that the goal was to identify the explorers by asking the fewest questions, so students would have to use their research to help them formulate the best questions. A group of students in each classroom would use a list of explorers to mark off names as they were eliminated. So after students researched the explorers, the students shared their research in a Google spreadsheet, then developed questions that they felt would let them identify the explorer quickly. The teacher set up a Skype with a fifth-grade class in another

state. Each class was given a different explorer. The first question the class decided on was: *Did your explorer come from Spain?* This was a fun activity and forced the class to think carefully about their questions based on their research.

- A junior world history classroom teacher and school librarian were discussing the CCSS ELA standards that state students should be able to write claims, use valid reasoning, incorporate multiple print and digital sources, and use advanced searches effectively. Together the teacher and librarian observed that there was a singular point of view in the textbook and began wondering how a variety of perspectives could be integrated into the course. Together, they set up a collaborative Google document and each Monday a discussion of the week was announced. One week the discussion was about the space race. While the textbook focused on the role of the United States in the space race, the librarian posted an article about another country's role. The school librarian listed the source of the document she posted, and then the classroom teacher and students added articles or primary sources around the topic as the week progressed. Each student was expected to read, view, or listen to at least one item and choose a different perspective each week to bring to class for discussion. Every nine weeks, the teacher and librarian would review the class discussions and determine how to encourage better resources that would stimulate the conversations and result in better research and writing.

Let's take a look at initiative 9. Assessment is a powerful tool that helps a librarian know how students and teachers are learning and provides guidance on where to go next.

INITIATIVE 9: ASSESSING THE RESULTS OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

- Research is a primary emphasis in the CCSS throughout the grades and academic areas. The high school librarian and the language arts teachers wanted to help senior high school students engage in more authentic research and evaluate their own research skills in order for them to assess their readiness for college. Students were asked to select a research topic that related to a topic of national interest. Some of the topics selected included: national debt, poverty, healthcare, and education reform. After using online and print resources to gain background knowledge for their work, students then created questions for five people from various backgrounds that they would interview about their topic. Students then interviewed their five people. Next students determined if their findings at the local level matched the views of people across the country. Students analyzed and synthesized their findings to create a research paper. After completing their research, each student led a conference with the teachers and librarian where they shared their research techniques and reflected on their own learning.

- When the seventh-grade science teacher and school librarian were collaborating on helping students navigate a complex text in science, they decided to have groups of students find images about the topic of the text, in one case, the causes of violent weather. The librarian helped students learn to use images that were free to access on the Internet. Then students collaboratively curated around images that they found using a collaborative photo tagging tool called Thinglink. The groups of students then commented on each other's Thinglink. Each group then edited their work based on the comments. After edits were made, each group shared their Thinglink. The students and (teacher) discovered that peer assessment was a very powerful incentive for groups to do their best work. When students were expected to share their work with their peers, the quality of their work improved.

The final initiative centers on managing integration, the library learning commons and technology.

INITIATIVE 10: MANAGING THE INTEGRATION OF CLASSROOM, LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS, AND TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

- When the elementary school principal began discussing moving to a flipped classroom environment, the school librarian, who worked at two schools, decided to apply a flipped approach to help his students have access to information about books when he was not available. He created videos of his booktalks and posted them online for students to use as they were selecting books. This idea evolved quickly; the students wanted to create and record booktalks for other students. Now students at both schools share booktalks and have begun to collaboratively develop these videos. The principals at both schools have used this example of flipping in their discussions of the idea with other educators. The librarian has now added library orientation information to his credits.

- When students were doing their annual poetry unit in language arts, the middle school librarian suggested to the special staff of the school, including the gifted resource teacher, the reading teacher, and the technology specialist that they create a makerspace for students in the library learning commons where students could create their own book of poetry. Students had several options. They could publish their book online, with graphics they designed using special graphic creation tools. The technology specialist helped with this project. Other students could work with a community member who taught bookbinding. Students learned to create a cover and binding for their books using a variety of types of paper, including some they created themselves. The school staff assisted the community member in helping students in the makerspace.

USING THE ACHIEVE/AASL DOCUMENT TO STIMULATE IDEAS ON WAYS TO IMPLEMENT THE COMMON CORE EXPECTATIONS

There is a wide variety of ways to use the action brief in your school or district. Before doing so, get a handle on the possible resources that have already been created:

- Download the Action Brief at: http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/

content/externalrelations/CCSSLibrarians-Brief_FINAL.pdf or at: http://tinyurl.com/mp63aek

• Check out the webinar recording (which can be used with your own group) that is available from AASL: http://www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/achieve-ccss or at: http://tinyurl.com/m5qulbp

• Experiment with the submit an idea form at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1eaw2SAiz2A94kcBUdNOxSce5gdDTAdQ-BR7bTaOHJrpY/viewform or at: http://tinyurl.com/lznbe4h

• See the submitted ideas at: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AmAXFFVz2qq_dENKY2xYUGNwbFFhV2tvR054Q1lwYlE&usp=sharing#gid=1 or at: http://tinyurl.com/lbeo4oa

Since the purpose of the action brief is to provide a plethora of ideas of library / learning commons involvement in Common Core or any other school improvement initiative, who would benefit from an idea brainstorm?

• You as an individual teacher librarian?
  • You with administrators?
  • A group of classroom teachers?
  • District or area groups?
  • Conference workshops?

We recommend that after such a brainstorm, a small group decide on priorities, an action plan, and a timeline to achieve those ideas plus a method of reporting the results back to the original group.

The best ideas are those that will make the largest and most direct impact on the students in your school and those that can be easily documented. An example might be helpful in making such decisions.

As a part time teacher librarian who serves three schools, you decided to spend half your limited time co-teaching units of instruction across the three schools and the other half doing administrative work. Knowing that you cannot be in three places at once, you realize you can actually do that digitally. You set up a knowledge building center for a unit of instruction that is taught across all three schools with

you, the teachers, and all the students being members of that collaborative digital space.[3] Such a showcase demonstrates to administrators, parents, and classroom teachers the value of having a professional teacher librarian involved in the elevation of learning experiences in an information-rich and technology-rich environment.

USING THE ACHIEVE/AASL DOCUMENT TO DISCUSS YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR ADMINISTRATOR

In an old time-management film we remember, the speaker suggested that you write down a list of the tasks that are confronting you this week and then divide that list into three categories: A, B, and C, with A's being the tasks that will make the most difference and are the highest priority. The C's will be the nitty gritty things like overdues or shelving, and the B's will be somewhere in the middle. Then, he suggested that you reprioritize into just A's and C's. Then start with your A's. Yes, you will have to work on the C's, but set aside a minimum time for those and as much time as you possibly can for the A's. Doing C's all day may give you a sense of getting a lot of things done, and you will be tired, but lack of progress on the A's will haunt you. Thus, we all ask ourselves the same question several times a day: "What is the best use of my time right now?" In the five or ten minutes I have right now, perhaps I can knock a hole in an A by doing a bit of planning, shooting an email to an important person, or re-arranging my afternoon so I can get some solid time spent on my A project.

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3 Search for the "knowledge building center" on Google and download and rename the free template there. It is now yours and you can change or modify the template to suit the particular unit you are teaching. You can also let into this space only those you want to be involved. The various classes can be studying together all at the same time or at different times. They can interact across classrooms or not as desired. They can do projects together or not. They can communicate across schools or just within the school. Each participating teacher partner can use the digital space to accomplish the same or different projects. And, best of all, you can monitor and mentor all the teachers and the students without leaving your desk, or, you can visit the teachers as physically as possible during the experience. Make sure to include an assessment of your contribution alongside those of the teachers so that you will be able to measure your impact on learning.

Such time-management actions demonstrate to administrators what you can contribute to teaching and learning in whatever time you have and help you make the case for spending more time doing those things. In the professional education literature, there is still an absence of recognition that teacher librarians can and should be indispensable in powerful teaching and learning. Hopefully, the Achieve / AASL action brief will be a tool to overcome stereotypical ideas as you incorporate the best of the best ideas into your repertoire.

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The authors were also co-writers of the AASL/Achieve document _Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The Role of The School Librarian._