

At the Center of Teaching and Learning, or Isolated Again, It's Time to Decide

David V. Loertscher

Ross Todd has issued the second installment of his New Jersey study that is a must read for every teacher librarian, school administrator, and library educator.

The study is at: http://cissl.rutgers.edu/images/stories/docs/njasl_phase%202_final.pdf

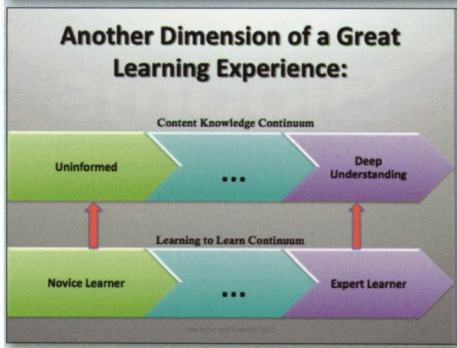
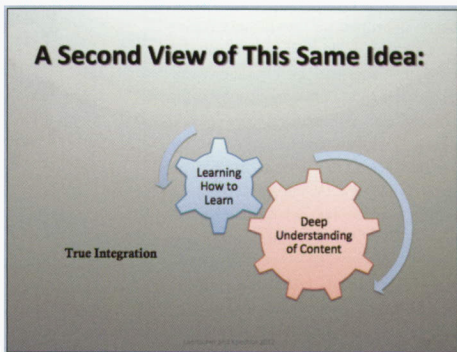
Dr. Todd has promised *Teacher Librarian* an expanded article about the study. In the meantime, there is a thread running through this study—a critical role divide in the profession and among library educators—to address here.

One role definition cites information literacy, and perhaps the love of reading, as the center piece and role of the teacher librarian. Content instruction is seen as the province of the classroom teacher. In this view, we are the specialists to which classroom teachers come to have their students interact with our curriculum and specialty. Thus, as the Common Core standards are approached in many states of the U.S. or other standards in the U.S. and Canada, we look for opportunities to pull in students to experience what we have to offer.

Thus, many teacher librarians would ask teachers to send their students to the library or Learning Commons, so we could conduct research projects and teach the students information literacy in the process. The students would be allowed to choose any topic they were interested in, so that we can focus on the process of building questions, finding information, creating a product, and presenting the results. In this role definition, what goes on in the classroom and the Learning Commons would largely be separate initiatives and often considered another pull out program or released time for teacher planning. As they play out, the two distinct functions isolate both the classroom teacher agenda from the teacher librarian's agenda and vice versa.

The second role definition as seen clearly in the Todd New Jersey study is focused on the integration of the classroom and Learning Commons and the integration of both content and learning-how-to-learn agendas. When this happens, Todd notes that the entire culture of the school changes from the administration down to classroom teachers and teacher librarians and on to the students. It is a very different and exciting learning culture.

Two diagrams of this merged concept are given below.



As illustrated, information literacy or 21st Century Skills are taught just in time in order to boost content learning. It is the act of achieving two major agendas at once and doing it more effectively than if these two were separated. In fact, the research bears out the idea that skills taught at the moment of need raise achievement significantly. We probably need major paper that reviews this body of research.

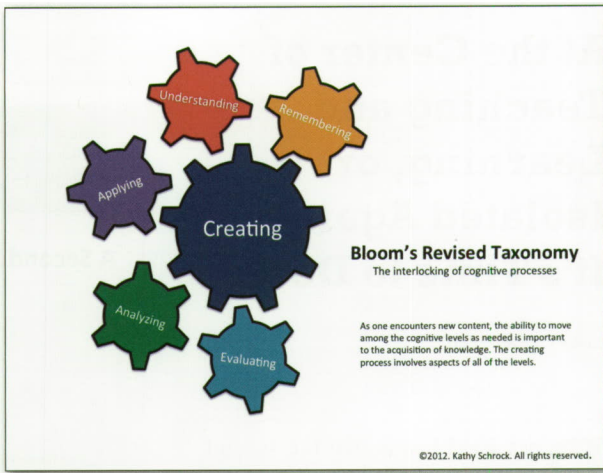
We posit that the separation and isolation of content and learning how to learn not only has isolated teacher librarians but made them invisible in school culture. We posit that this has resulted in the notion that because of Google and the Internet, classroom teachers can easily take over the role of teaching information literacy—thus, saving the school a professional salary. That attitude

seems to be rampant in any school district facing financial exigency.

Two recent models that reconsider Bloom's Taxonomy provide an additional foundational reason for joint co-teaching of content and process learning. The first is from Shelley Wright's blog, *Powerful Learning Practice*, at: <http://plpnetwork.com/2012/05/15/flipping-blooms-taxonomy/>. In her post she flips Bloom's Taxonomy, so that creating is the foundational element, as shown in the following visual:

The second is a model created by Kathy Schrock who interconnects creating and creativity with all the levels of Bloom (see her full page on this topic at: <http://www.schrockguide.net/bloomin-apps.html>)

Teacher Librarians who create Knowledge Building Centers¹ and, in particular, Book2Cloud² learning experiences, understand the Todd study, because they begin to experience the school culture described by teacher librarians and others in the twelve schools of the study. They understand why two heads are better than one. They un-



derstand how they have moved from the periphery of learning in the school to its center. They are no longer invisible. Their job prospects are much more secure. The

complaint that administrators don't understand their role disappears. They are perceived as curriculum and technology leaders in the school.

Many professionals embrace the hope that legislated mandates will save their jobs. We suggest that demonstrated contributions at the heart of teaching and learning must precede legal mandates. If that is true, then each teacher librarian must assess and reassess their role position in the school and use every means possible to move to the center.

1 To create Knowledge Building Centers, use the following Google template: <https://sites.google.com/site/knowledgebuildingcenter/>

2 See the Book2Cloud web site with 30+ examples at: <https://sites.google.com/site/book-2cloud/> Also find there the template to pull down from Google to create your own.

