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SLM 501

**Evaluation and Analysis of Library Media Programs**

In recent years, libraries have shifted from standalone spaces for reading and research to being flexible learning environments, where the library standards are integrated into the subject matter standards. Instead of simply supporting classroom teachers and their curriculum, librarians are expected to help students and teachers become effective users of ideas and information. More and more, integration and collaboration are considered the benchmarks of a highly effective librarian.

**AASL’s Planning Guide for Empowering Learners with School Library Program Assessment Rubric**

*Empowering Learners*, the AASL’s Guidelines for School Library Programs, “envisions the school library program of the future.” Using the AASL’s *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*, the mission is “to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information.” The focus is to outline the process of creating a 21st century library. *Empowering Learners* outlines four major aspects for building an exemplary school library program: I) Developing visions for learning, II) Teaching for learning, III) Building the learning environment, and IV) Empowering learning through leadership. Each area is broken down into fifteen guidelines to further guide librarians in their mission, collaboration, assessment, long-term planning, collection development, and leadership.

*A Planning Guide for Empowering Learners* is a companion publication which guides librarians through the actual planning process of creating their 21st century library. It walks librarians through the process of developing a mission statement, goals and objectives, and action plans. School library programs are never truly finished – there is no ultimate end goal in mind. Library programs should always be reassessing the needs of their community and looking for ways to improve. It is a continuous cycle of assessing the library program, planning changes, and improving. The Library Program Assessment Rubric provides choices for each of the fifteen guidelines to help librarians and library stakeholders evaluate the school library program and look for areas needing improvement. When used effectively, it identifies program strengths and opportunities for growth. Then librarians and stakeholders can create an action plan to help the program continue to improve.

The Library Program Assessment Rubric is aiming for highly effective library programs, which is why many of the options for these standards include "Exemplary" or "Comprehensive" as the highest standard versus "In-progress" or "Basic." Looking at many of the criteria on the rubric, you can get a sense for what makes a library program “exemplary” versus one that is still “in progress”. Exemplary programs are ones in which the areas are aligned with the wider mission of the school community, and missions and policies are designed in collaboration with stakeholders, rather than independently.

The strength of the AASL’s Assessment Rubric is that it provides a tool to guide libraries in becoming highly effective programs. The major downside is that going through the evaluation itself is a rather long and cumbersome process, which could deter people from using it. It may be better to divide the rubric by the four major areas and evaluate each area at a different time. Another disadvantage is that some guidelines assess areas which are out of the control of many school librarians. Looking at the "Staffing" question, most schools in Frederick County wouldn't even meet the lowest "Basic" requirement, which is one full-time library media specialist and one half-time support person, as most libraries do not have media assistants.

**AASL’s L4L School Librarian Performance and Evaluation System**

The Learning 4 Life (L4L) School Librarian Evaluation System is also divided into four major domains: 1) Planning and Preparation, 2) The Library Environment, 3) Instruction, and 4) Professional Responsibilities. These are related to the Library Program Assessment Rubric although in a slightly different order. The first and last areas match up: 1) Planning and Preparation relates to (I) Developing visions for learning, and 4) Professional Responsibilities relates to (IV) Empowering learning through leadership. The other two domains are switched but still correspond: 2) Library environment relates to (III) Building the learning environment, and 3) Instruction relates to (II) Teaching for Learning. The AASL considers these four domains to represent the “principles of best practice in teaching and school librarianship.”

Looking at the L4L School Librarian Evaluation Rubric, the subcomponents listed under the four domains are narrower in scope and focus on areas that are within the control of the librarian. There is less emphasis on collaboration and involving other stakeholders, and more focus on knowledge of the curriculum, resources, and having library processes in place.

The strength of the L4L School Librarian Evaluation rubric is that it is easier to use than the Library Program Assessment Rubric. Each sub-component has the same four possible ratings: Distinguished, Proficient, Basic, and Unsatisfactory. A standardized rating system means that the rubric itself is easier for librarians to complete. Librarians can even use this as a self-assessment tool periodically throughout the year. Then they can use the results to update their professional development plan, if necessary.

**Description of the Urbana Middle School Media Center program**

My interview was with a library media specialist at a suburban middle school of approximately 850 students. I chose this media specialist at the recommendation of my media supervisor. The library media specialist was familiar with the AASL’s Library Program Assessment Rubric, but had not used it before. The L4L School Librarian Evaluation rubric is the basis for FCPS’s “A Framework for Library Media Specialists” Rubric, so although the names are different, the components and sub-components are identical.

The library media specialist has been teaching for fifteen years, all in middle school. She began as a classroom teacher and then earned her master’s degree in technology instruction. She worked as a technology teacher before completing her certification as a media specialist.

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| **Aspect 1: Developing Visions for Learning: *Mission*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Statement | Comprehensive | The LMS has a comprehensive mission plan; however the mission was developed independently from the school’s overall mission. The mission is posted on the media center website, but when asked the LMS couldn’t articulate the mission statement without looking it up. |
| Alignment | Endorsed |
| Publication | Posted |
| **Aspect 2: Teaching for Learning: *Collaboration*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Team Roles | Defined | Being in middle school and having more flexible planning time, the LMS has ample time to collaborate with teachers. However, the involvement of stakeholders in providing feedback is informal. |
| Participation | Informal |
| **Aspect 2: Teaching for Learning: *Reading*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Instruction | Articulated | The LMS was clear that she usually introduces lessons on authors or genres, with any follow-up lessons being taught by classroom teachers. Reading promotions occur, with the focus sometimes on reading more and sometimes involving an extrinsic reward. The LMS does collaborate with the public librarian at the local library for some reading promotions. |
| Promotion | Initiating, Periodic, Neutral & Extrinsic, Into the School Community |
| **Aspect 2: Teaching for Learning: *Multiple Literacies*** | | |
| Subcategory |  | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Learning Process | Comprehensive | Technology is the LMS’s strong point, so she is certainly on top of any and all ways to integrate technology to support multiple literacies. She teaches comprehensive lessons about ethical use and has the guidelines posted on the media website. |
| Legal, Ethical, and Social Responsibilities | Articulated |
| **Aspect 2: Teaching for Learning*: Inquiry*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Educational standards | Ongoing | The LMS clearly supports the research process and partners with classroom teachers on research projects. However, when asked about classroom standards, she only commented that the Common Core standards are integrated with the AASL standards, which she follows. She said she does teach a research process model, but it is not clearly identified with a name, like the Big 6 Model. |
| Differentiation | Leveled |
| Information Search Process | Incidental |
| Evaluation | Comprehensive |
| Role of Technology | Integral |
| **Aspect 2: Teaching for Learning: *Assessment for Learning*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Formative Assessments | Integrated | The LMS collaborates with classroom teachers on formative assessments; however summative assessments and grading are usually left up to the classroom teacher. |
| Summative Assessments | Ongoing |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *Planning and Evaluating*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Planning Process | Comprehensive | The LMS has developed a long-term plan for the media program, but it was developed independently of the school’s overall mission, and without involving any outside stakeholders. |
| Strategic Plan | In progress |
| Stakeholder Participation | Unilateral |
| Evaluation | Periodic |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *Staffing*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Quantity | Basic | The areas of staffing are determined at the county level and out of the control of the LMS. However, using the rubric, the staffing level is basic at best with only one full-time LMS and no support staff. There is training provided for any library volunteers as needed. |
| Position Descriptions | In progress |
| Training | Informal |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *The Learning Space*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| User orientation | Assistive | Urbana Middle School is only 10 years old, so the LMS certainly benefits from having a new, up-to-date library space. The media center is large, with areas for multiple purposes and plenty of shelving. The middle school schedule allows for flexible access throughout the school day. There is an up to date library website which allows 24/7 access to library resources and databases. |
| Access | Flexible & Open |
| Function | Multi-purpose |
| Storage | Exemplary |
| Website | A Virtual Library |
| Technology Infrastructure | High Speed & Reliable |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *Budget*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Planned and data-driven | Comprehensive | Although the budget is set at the county level, the LMS said it was more than sufficient to meet the needs of the media center. The budget she puts together is a comprehensive, multi-year budget. Because she feels she has enough funding, the additional funding efforts are fairly limited. |
| Funding Level | Sufficient |
| Outcomes-oriented | Outputs |
| Proactive | Limited |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *Policies*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Stakeholder Involvement | Collaborative | Again, the policies are set at the county level, so the media specialist has little control over them. All the media specialists in the county follow the same policies. The main policies that are shared with the larger school community are the Ethical Use policy and the Reconsideration policy for book challenges. |
| Collection Development | Formal |
| Ethical Use of Information | Inclusive |
| Technical Services | Formal |
| Resource Access | Comprehensive |
| Reconsideration Policy | Formal |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *Collection and Information Access*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Diversity | Multicultural | In most areas, the LMS is exemplary in the collection development for her library. She said she always takes diversity and reading levels into account for her selections. The two areas lacking are curriculum support and student input. When asked, she stated that she purchases materials related to the curriculum, but she does not have a curriculum map nor does she collaborate with teachers before placing an order. She also does accept book suggestions from students, but there is no formal request process for student suggestions. |
| Levels of Difficulty | Client-Based |
| Intellectual Freedom | Fully Supported |
| Curriculum Support | Curriculum related |
| Adequacy | Ample |
| Quality | Criteria based |
| Alternative formats | Ample |
| Currency | Current |
| Responsive to student input | In progress |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *Outreach*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Advocacy Plan | Limited | This is an area where the LMS acknowledged that she needs to improve. The mission statement is developed, but not tied to the overall school mission. The school librarian works with outside groups, but not often and not on a larger scale. Current information about the library program is communicated through the media website, but it is mostly in the form of a Twitter feed. |
| Partnerships | Collaborative |
| Communication | In progress |
| **Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment: *Professional Development*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Plan | Comprehensive | This area is one where the LMS felt very proud of her efforts. She does PD for teachers in the school and because of her technology savvy, she is frequently in classrooms training teachers on technology. She is active in professional organizations at the state and national level. |
| PD for school community members | Comprehensive |
| PD for school librarian | Active |
| **Aspect 4: Empowering Learning Through Leadership: *Leadership*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Involvement | Initiative | Again, leadership is an area where the LMS earns the highest marks. She is on the school improvement team and volunteers for other committees as they come up. She personally advocated for library and makerspace time during lunches, to allow students even more access to the library. |
| Innovation | Change Agent |
| Professional Activity | Professional Engagement |
| **Aspect 4: Empowering Learning Through Leadership: *Relationships*** | | |
| Subcategory | Descriptor Choice | Reason for Descriptor Choice |
| Principal | Supportive | The LMS partners with the PTA and the local library and has good relationships with those members. There are parent volunteers who regularly help in the media center. The principal is definitely a supporter of the library program, but the LMS couldn’t say for certain that he feels the program is an integral part of the school. |
| Parents | Involved |
| Community Organization | Involved |
| Libraries in the Greater Community | Collaborative |

The strongest areas of the library program are the ones which received the highest ratings for all of the subcomponents. After reviewing the data gathered, the three strongest areas of the Urbana Middle School library program are:

1) Teaching Multiple Literacies (Aspect 2 – Teaching for Learning)

2) Professional Development (Aspect 3 – Building the Learning Environment)

3) Leadership (Aspect 4 – Empowering Learning through Leadership)

The three weakest areas which need improvement are:

1) The Mission (Aspect 1: Developing Visions for Learning)

2) Outreach (Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment)

3) Planning and Evaluating (Aspect 3: Building the Learning Environment)

**Analysis of the Urbana Middle School Library Media Program and Librarian**

In my conversation with the library media specialist, it was clear that she excels at her job and that she loves being a media specialist. If the goal of a distinguished media specialist is that they “ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information,” then she is definitely a distinguished media specialist. With a master’s degree in technology instruction, she is adept at supporting multiple literacies and integrating technology seamlessly into lessons. The library program received a “Comprehensive” rating for the Multiple Literacies component of Teaching for learning. The media specialist makes sure teachers are up- to-date on the latest apps and tools, and she provides formal and ad-hoc training as needed. She had just recently painted and set up a green screen area for the morning announcements, and she was very excited to share it with me and demonstrate how it worked.

However, at times it sounded like the media specialist places her role as an instructional technology specialist before her role as a media specialist. She is frequently in classrooms assisting with lessons which she views as collaboration, but she is mostly supporting the technology piece of a lesson or project. When asked how she collaborates with the other teachers, she said that it depends on the teacher. If they are doing a research project, some teachers will ask her to do a media lesson on the research databases or how to do a bibliography. She supports the classroom teachers and their curriculum, but there is no true collaboration or co-teaching that occurs.

When I asked about administrative areas of the library program such as the mission statement and collection development, she acknowledged that she needed to involve students and other stakeholders, but she had not as of yet. She clearly has a good informal relationship with students, teachers, and community members, but she needs to go through the formal process of involving them in her planning processes. In each of the four key aspects of the Library Program Assessment Rubric, the program received ratings of “In Progress” or “Basic” for areas of stakeholder involvement. Those areas are the weakest areas of the library program – the Mission Statement, Planning and Evaluating, and Outreach.

Because the FCPS evaluation tool for media specialists is identical to the L4L School Librarian Evaluation Rubric, the media specialist was familiar with the four domains and the subcomponents beneath them. The L4L Evaluation Rubric does not place as much emphasis on collaboration or involving the larger school community in planning. As a result, the library media specialist received “Distinguished” ratings in every area except those involving collaboration.

**Action Plan: Goals and Objectives**

The areas of the library program needing improvement are the Mission, Planning and Evaluating, and Outreach. Therefore, I propose the following goals:

Goal 1: The library mission statement is aligned with the school and district missions.

* The library media specialist will solicit input from all necessary stakeholders regarding the mission.
* The library media specialist will craft a mission statement endorsed by the administration which focuses on the library being an integral part of the school
* The library media specialist will share the mission statement publicly – through signage, school publications, and online.

Goal 2: The library program’s long range plan is tied to the school’s overall mission, with input from school community groups.

* The library media specialist will gather necessary data about the library program including circulation numbers, reading levels, demographics, and any other relevant information to be used for long range planning.
* The library media specialist will invite all school community stakeholders to participate in the long range planning process.
* Once the long range plan is developed, the library media specialist will periodically share reports of data results from the long range plan.

Goal 3: The library media program is supported by stakeholders, whose input is used to continuously improve the library program.

* The library media specialist will create a library advisory group and invite students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to participate.
* The library advisory group will meet quarterly to review and evaluate the mission and goals of the library program, and to discuss any areas for improvement.
* The library media specialist will share the results from the quarterly meetings with the administration, in school publications, and on the school website.

**Review of my Professional Development Plan**

After reviewing the L4L School Librarian Performance and Evaluation System, I realized that I had more work to do the area of Planning and Preparation, as well as in my Professional Responsibilities. First, I would like to focus on Component 1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of the Content Curriculum and Process. I worked in my previous school for five years and had significant knowledge of the major content areas in each grade level. I also created a curriculum map for the school as part of my SLM 506 class. However, I am now in a new school and because of that I do not have that same curriculum knowledge. I inquired with teachers in the beginning of the year if there was any school-wide curriculum map, but I was told that everyone uses the curriculum that is online on *Curriculum Now*. I currently feel that I have “Basic” knowledge of this component. My long term goal would be to eventually move up to a “Distinguished” rating. One objective that would help me achieve that is taking the time to create a new curriculum map for this school.

My second area of growth is in Component 1f: Collaborating in the Design of Instructional Experiences. This connects with one of my three main objectives from my Professional Development Plan: “Connect with other teachers in my school through collaborative lessons and/or units.” Again, currently in this area I would rate myself as “Basic” because I work with some teachers by supporting their lessons with resources, but I have not yet started to reach out to teachers or started planning with them on a regular basis. My goal in this area would be to move up to “Proficient,” where I am collaborating on learning activities that use multiple resources, research skills, and literacies.

My third and final area of growth is in Component 4c: Communication with School Staff and Community. This loosely ties into one of my objectives, “Increase my own professional recognition through involvement on committees as well as social media outlets such as Twitter.” It more clearly relates to the overall focus on advocacy, and that constantly communicating and sharing information is the best way to advocate for your library program. My long term goal would be to receive a “Distinguished” rating where I am sharing evidence of the effectiveness of the program using the AASL’s Standards for the 21st Century Learner. However, in the shorter term, I will focus on becoming “Proficient” and communicating with the staff and school community on a more regular basis.

**Conclusion**

School library programs are never finished – they should always be reassessing the needs of their community and making plans to improve their program. Assessment tools like the AASL’s Library Program Assessment Rubric can help librarians and stakeholders evaluate the school library program and look for the areas that need improvement. When used effectively, evaluation rubrics identify opportunities for growth which can be used to create an action plan to help the program continue to improve.

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