Two Libraries Working toward Common Goals

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School libraries, the bustling hubs of school buildings, provide students with an abundance of resources. Students look to their school library to find new books, seek information, creatively solve problems, and use technology. School libraries play an essential role in students' academic growth and development of lifelong learning skills. In 2012 ALA posited a lofty representation for school libraries, and the AASL 2016 position statement continues the tradition: "Beyond its curricular role, the effective school library program gives each individual member of the learning community a venue for exploring questions that arise out of personalized learning, individual curiosity, and personal interest." All of the wonderful resources and services that school libraries provide are easily accessible to the population of the building during the school year. But where do students access resources when summer arrives?

Public libraries would seem to be natural partners, sharing the same student patrons as school libraries. Public libraries are vast repositories of knowledge and fiction, offering innovative and engaging youth programming. Endless information is available to students, in both digital and print form—and these services are available year-round. Students who are able to get to the public library have the world at their fingertips. But not all students are able to access the public library. How can the public library provide services that reach all students?

In addition to accessibility issues, school and public libraries have had to deal with significant budget cuts. Although the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a piece of legislation allowing federal dollars to be directed to school libraries, was passed in late 2015, historical downtrends in school budgets have left school libraries deficient in staffing and resources (Peet and Vercelletto 2016, 12). School libraries are not the only public institutions facing fiscal concerns. Public libraries continue to struggle with ongoing budget cuts, specifically decreases in state grant allocations proposed in the fiscal year 2017 budget request put before Congress in February 2016 (Peet 2016). Operational restraints created by diminishing budgets do not lessen student patrons' reliance on resources made accessible by these public institutions.

In an effort to meet the needs of shared student patrons, school and public libraries look to collaborative ventures, sharing not only resources but also curriculum and programming objectives. What arrangements can be made to allow both libraries to overcome the obstacles they face when trying to meet the varied needs of student patrons? Real-life examples presented below can serve to stimulate thinking about collaboration beyond the school walls.

Students Who Need Help

Several student subgroups may benefit from cooperative programs established between the school and public library. These groups include, but are not limited to, prolific readers, students identified as struggling readers, and preschool-aged children. High-quality reciprocal programs that consider the needs of outlier student subgroups can not only support students' academic performance, but also lay the groundwork for the engagement and motivation of lifelong readers.

Prolific Readers

How many times has a prolific reader excitedly searched for the school library's copy of a book, only to

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find that the book has already been checked out? A reciprocal relationship between the school library and the public library could alleviate this problem. In 1997 Matthew Lighthart and Creedence Spreder looked at Virginia Beach's school library dilemma. Virginia Beach's school library was in need of renovation, and the local public library was too small to meet patrons' needs. To solve the problem, a joint library was built. One obvious benefit of the project was that reciprocal lending agreements dramatically increased access to materials (2014, 33).

Struggling Readers

Struggling readers often fall further and further behind their peers who can read proficiently, especially during the summer months. Richard L. Allington asserted, "Struggling readers just participate in too little high-success reading activity every day. This is one reason so few struggling readers ever become achieving readers" (2013, 525). The best way to improve reading skills and comprehension simply comes down to volume of reading. Students who read, read, and read are more likely to find

literacy success. But more often than not, struggling students don't take advantage of summer reading programs offered by public libraries.

A documented benefit of a well-run school library is better school performance. Across the United States, research shows that students in schools with well-equipped and well-staffed school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized tests than their peers in schools without libraries. More than sixty studies show clear evidence of this connection between student achievement and the presence of school libraries with a qualified school librarian (Sorestad 2014, 4). Logically, then, creating a collaborative relationship between the school library and the public library's summer programming would potentially lead to greater academic success.

With this knowledge in mind, Denton Public Library (DPL), Texas Woman's University, and four elementary schools in DPL's service area collaborated on a research-based summer reading program. The highly coordinated program included participating students' names being published in the news-

paper, a public librarian making visits to schools and youth organizations, school librarians participating in public library story times during the summer, author events, and year-end evaluation of the collaborative programming. Outcomes were largely positive, showing a 27 percent increase in summer reading participation and a 23 percent increase in youth programming participation (Tucker et al. 2015). Coordinated summer reading programs not only increased student participation, but also promoted the roles of the school library and public library in the community.

Preschool-Aged Kids

Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) is a joint initiative of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children. With the aid of resources available at the ECRR website <http://everychildreadytoread. org>, four thousand libraries across the country act under the assumption that parents are a child's first and best teacher. Getting children ready for school is vital. Parents can engage in five reading practices to get kids ready for school. These practices are talking, singing, reading,

writing, and playing. ECRR encourages public libraries to augment the efforts of parents: "Much of ECRR involves librarians modeling the five practices for parents during story times or other adult–child programs, as well as at parent workshops in day care centers, teen parent programs, or large community events" (Celano and Neuman 2016, 75).

Public libraries can serve those children who are not old enough for school, and are, therefore, beyond the reach of school library services. Singing during library programs, in particular, has been proven to have benefits for kids. Peter Andrew de Vries pointed out the many benefits of singing: "(1) music in storytelling sessions enhanced social interaction for children; (2) music focuses the children in storytelling sessions; (3) music is embedded in storytelling; and (4) sessions provided new ideas for music in the home and beyond" (2008, 473). The obvious benefits of music for kids means that it should be a tool in education. ECRR and similar public library programs share a goal with school library programs: helping children be successful in school and life. School librarians can help make parents of school-age children aware of public library services for all kids, including students' siblings too young for school.

Public Library Summer Programming Beneficial to Students

In a 2016 interview, Angie Petrie, director of youth services at Stillwater (MN) Public Library (SPL), described the process of programming. She pointed out that SPL offers year-round programs for kids of all ages, and those programs are described on the library website <http://stillwaterlibrary.org>. A huge benefit of these programs, especially during the summer, is prevent-ing or reducing academic recession (aka "summer slide"), which often results when kids are out of school. Petrie also pointed out that these programs have other important qualities: they are fun, and attendees don't feel the pressure associated with school progress. She described summer programs offered at SPL and pointed out that SPL programs offered over the summer currently attract anywhere from nine to eighty kids. Seventy to eighty participants will show up for programs where stories are read to kids ages three to five, and approximately fifty kids will show up for crafts.

Reading to a dog. Groups that would especially benefit: ELL students, prolific readers, students of low academic ability, dog lovers, dogs. Certified therapy dogs come to SPL during the summer. Kids ages seven through twelve are invited to come and read to the dogs. Each student is given a fifteen-minute timeslot. ELL students and struggling readers need to practice reading fluency, and this program gives them a low-stress opportunity to do so.

Weird science. Groups that would especially benefit: struggling readers, preschool-aged kids. Trained teen mentors lead a STEM-based activity for kids, including kids who haven't yet been enrolled in school. This program, which is for kids from six to nine, works, in part, because older students teach younger students, and so the atmosphere is often a bit more relaxed than when adults present programs. The intended outcome is to get kids interested in math and science in a hands-on and fun manner.

Preschool lab-STEM story time. Groups that would especially benefit: preschool-aged kids. This activity is geared for kids from three to five. Stories based on math and science are read to kids, and then these "young scientists" explore a science

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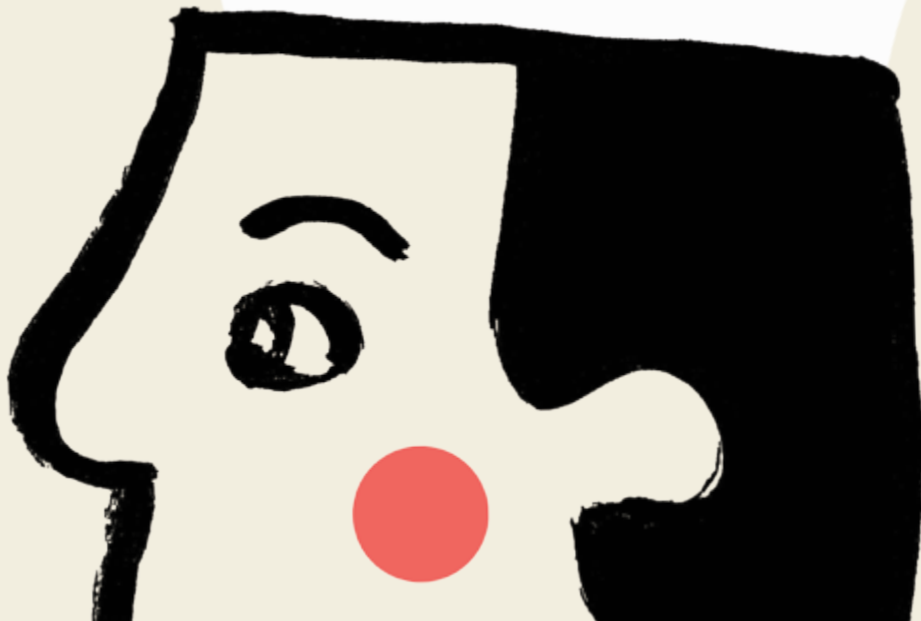
or math-based theme in a lab setting. In summer 2016 SPL focused on these themes: rainbows, my body, muscles, ocean animals, magnetism, nature walk, dinosaurs, birds, and gardens.

Crafternoons. Groups that would especially benefit: students of low academic ability, preschool-aged kids. SPL has opportunities for kids from ages six through ten to be creative. The premise is that students who are allowed to exercise their curiosity become stronger students. Summer 2016 weekly themes included treasure holders, robots, bookmarks, castles, rock creatures, painted tiles, envelopes, T-shirts, and buttons.

While it is difficult for the school librarian to promote these programs during the summer months, nothing stops a school librarian from promoting these programs while school is still in session and handing out the public library's summer schedule of events. Discussing public library programs while kids are in school—and including reciprocal links at both libraries' websites—could potentially increase participation in both school library and public library events. Petrie expressed the importance of good relationships between public and school libraries.

One area of cooperation could be communication. If the public library staff is made aware of school assignments, they can prepare for those students who may have questions when they arrive in the public library. Databases that address assigned topics can be shown to these students, even if the library's physical collection is limited (Petrie 2016). Not only can this relationship between school and public libraries increase participation in public library programs year-round, but it can also increase student achievement during the school year.

Reciprocal Support

Kari Phillips is the school librarian at Lake Elmo Elementary School in the Stillwater (MN) School District. In a 2016 interview she mentioned that she has already established a strong relationship with the Lake Elmo Public Library (LEPL), a library located near the Stillwater Public Library, but a separate entity (see <www.lakeelmo-publiclibrary.org>). In the fall, the LEPL director visits the students at Lake Elmo Elementary to gear kids up for reading and remind them of LEPL programming; he returns at the end of the school year to talk up the public library's summer reading program (Phillips 2016). Part of the reason for the visits? In a word: money. Phillips said, "Due to budget reasons at Lake Elmo Elementary I was not able to purchase the Maud Hart Lovelace books and do a program, so I had [the LEPL director] come in to talk about the books and do a public library program." The Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award is a Minnesota student-choice award; nominees are actively promoted by school librarians throughout many school districts, including the Stillwater Area Public Schools, Phillips's district. Obviously, not having the funds to purchase the nominated books hindered Phillips's ability to get her students to read them. Public library to the rescue! Having those books supplied by the public library obviously saved the school district money and introduced some families to the public library—a win-win situation for both the school district and the public library.

SPL's Petrie expressed an interest in also creating a partnership with regard to the Maud Hart Lovelace award books. "In the past, I've ordered two copies of each title.

This year I will order three and definitely have voting boxes out" (Petrie 2016). She suggested that, in the coming school year, the local school libraries inform students that they could vote for their favorite books not only in the school libraries but in the public library as well. She also shared that the public library enjoys a deep discount on certain products. It would be relatively simple, in the case of Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award nominees, for the public library to order the books and encourage student patrons to check them out. This approach would save the school libraries money and would potentially increase the number of students using the public library (Petrie 2016).

Conclusion

Multiple public institutions provide services for communities. If one created a Venn diagram of the people school and public libraries serve, the circles would intersect in the case of school-aged students. This reality makes a relationship between public libraries and school libraries seem obvious.

With continued budgetary restraints limiting school and public libraries, collaborative ventures can create a much-needed support system for students and help meet students' varied needs. Programs can take on a variety of forms, and the investment of librarians' time and effort may range from minimal to very involved. Reciprocal programs not only have the potential to improve patrons' access to resources but may also invigorate library programming and boost student achievement in school. Future programs that are built on research-based methods may help create useful frameworks that expand the collaborative efforts between school and public libraries.

In many communities, there are already attempts to build upon

this reciprocal dynamic. It takes buy-in from people in both buildings. Promoting programs that each offers, sharing costs, and being visible in the wider community are three ways to improve the relationship. Small initial steps can lead to bigger, bolder collaborative programs in the future. But each journey starts with that initial step. Once the initial collaborative gesture has been extended, all stakeholders have an opportunity to make gains and improve student success.

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