

IV. Evaluation

Current research has shown the significant role that a strong school library media program plays in student achievement. Of particular note is the Scholastic report that can be read at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/slcsurvey.cfm>.

School librarians are instrumental and essential in encouraging Maine students to be successful in becoming self-directed life long learners, clear and effective communicators, creative and practical problem solvers, responsible and involved citizens and integrated and informed thinkers.

Most school districts in the State of Maine evaluate the school librarian in the same context as teachers or educational technicians (depending upon the position). Oftentimes, these yearly performance reviews are based only upon the school district's proscribed job descriptions that have little to do with student success.

True and valid evaluation of a Library Media Program goes much deeper than the job description of the person in charge of that program. This evaluation must be *thorough, comprehensive* and *ongoing*.

One of the most important things to keep in mind is the data that your school or school district considers important measures of student achievement. Is it the goal of the school/district to increase reading scores? Is it the goal for the school/district to meet the Maine Learning Results? Once you know these goals, you can tailor the Library Media Program to help achieve those goals. Once you identify the goal of the district for student achievement, you can tailor and enhance the library media program to encourage students to achieve these school/district goals. How the library program assists students to meet the stated goals is intrinsic to the evaluation of the library program.

Evaluation of the Library Media Program involves, *at least*, the five roles of the School Library as identified in **Information Power**: (the following is paraphrased from **Information Power**, 1998)

- Collaboration, Leadership and Technology
- Learning and Teaching
- Information Access and Delivery
- Program Administration
- Connections to the Learning Community

Using these five roles as a starting point, evaluation tools can be developed for any school library program. The program evaluation can focus on one school or an entire district program.

Collaboration, Leadership and Technology:

- Establish a good relationship with teachers
- Raise teachers expectations of what the school library media program can do
- Become an expert on the goals of the curriculum

- Show the connections between information literacy and content specific objectives
- Solicit the assistance of teachers in developing the library media program
- Be flexible in expectations and timing
- Be persistent

Learning and Teaching:

- Integrate the library media program into the curriculum
- Integrate information literacy standards into the school curriculum
- Promote and model collaborative planning and curriculum development
- Model and promote creative, effective and collaborative teaching
- Access a wide range of information resources and services
- Engage students in reading, viewing and listening for understanding and enjoyment
- Support the diversity of the learning community with regards to learning abilities, styles and needs
- Foster individual and collaborative inquiry
- Integrate varied forms of technology for learning and teaching
- Provide links to the larger learning community

Information Access and Delivery:

- Provide intellectual access to information and ideas for learning
- Provide physical access to information and resources for learning
- Provide a climate that is conducive to learning
- Develop and evaluate collaboratively the library media collections to ensure they support the school's curriculum and meet the diverse learning needs of the school community
- Endorse the right of intellectual freedom
- Ensure that the library media program policies, procedures and practices reflect legal guideline and professional ethics

Program Administration:

- Support the mission, goals, objectives and continuous improvement of the school
- Provide, at a minimum, one full-time library media specialist supported by appropriate, qualified staff per school
- Provide professional and support staff based upon the school's instructional programs, services, facilities, size and student population
- Enlist ongoing administrative support
- Establish a comprehensive and collaborative long-range strategic plan
- Establish ongoing assessment of the library program
- Provide adequate funding for the library program
- Provide ongoing staff development for the library staff as well as instruction in information literacy skills for the learning community

- Communicate clearly the library media program's mission, goals, functions and www.maslibraries.org

- impact on the learning community
- Manage the human, financial and physical resources effectively

Connections to the Learning Community:

- Collaboration: Establish effective working relationships with:
 - Teachers
 - Administration
 - Parents and families
 - Public information resources (libraries, museums, governmental offices, etc.)
 - Colleges and universities
 - District, regional and state educational offices and agencies
- Leadership:
 - Work as curriculum and instructional leader in the school
 - Organize learning opportunities within and beyond the school
 - Promote the school library media program as a central resource for the learning community
 - Enlist the support of local community agencies and businesses
 - Become involved in policy and decision making at the local, district, regional and state levels
- Technology:
 - Use instructional technology collaboratively with teachers in instruction
 - Use technology to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction
 - Use technology to provide information resources for the learning community
 - Use technology to provide resources beyond the school
 - Use technology to assist students in demonstrating what they have learned

Using these criteria as a guideline, a simple evaluation form can be created that will allow you to evaluate the effectiveness of the library media program. Rank each criteria as “Fully meets”, “Partially meets” or “Does not meet”. Where the evaluation shows a need for improvement, this will affect the long-range plan for improvement of the program.

The Colorado Department of Education has created a very simple Library Programs Evaluation.

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/litstandards/evaluation.htm>

The Massachusetts School Library Media Association has a very detailed school library program assessment tool. Click on the “Resources” tab at

<http://www.maschoolibraries.org/>