Teacher-School Library Media Specialist Collaboration through Social Marketing Strategies: An Information Behavior Study

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Based on the importance of teacher-school library media specialist collaboration , this study seeks to advance knowledge involving the dynamics of this special relationship. The subjects were a group of student librarians--themselves experienced teachers--as they attempted to foster collaborative information literacy activities with selected teachers in their host schools.(Note: The term "student librarian" is the official term applied within the institutional setting in which the research occurred.) The investigators instructed these student librarians to base their approaches on social marketing theory and practice. In addition, the investigators acquired data about collaboration processes from two focus groups made up of experienced teachers, who responded to a set of questions designed to measure teacher predictability to engage in collaboration. Findings indicated that collaboration is expensive, involving investments of time, resources, and human interactions within complex systems of institutional culture and personal expectations. Although complex, social marketing principles are integrated throughout the collaboration process; they signal that school library media specialists, as marketers of a socially useful service, need to build trust for themselves and promote the collaborative process as a socially and professionally rewarding activity. Toward this end, school library media specialists-as-marketers have the responsibility for developing a social market environment conductive to collaboration between teachers and school library media specialist.

Research Questions, Goals, and Objectives of the Project

This research project attempted to field-test a strategy for teacher-SLMS collaboration based on social marketing techniques designed to promote collaborative activities between teachers and librarians in the creation of instructional units that would likely promote student achievement through the better use of information literacy skills and information seeking behaviors. It essentially looked at the process of librarian-teacher collaboration as one of human-information seeking behavior and interaction. The strategy was also designed to help teachers understand the importance of information literacy and to help them integrate information literacy skills and information seeking behaviors into classroom instruction. The approach used in this study was influenced and informed by theoretical assumptions contained in social marketing; the

sociological of collaboration, and exchange theory. Specifically the research focused on these questions:

x   Can social marketing strategies be used effectively to promote collaboration between classroom teachers and building-level librarians (for example, SLMSs) in improving information literacy skills of students?

that clinical case reports of individuals are representative enough of a specific group that generalizations can be made about the behaviors of individuals belonging to such groups or cohorts.

See appendixes 1-4 for examples on measurement and recording instruments used in the study.

Findings

Test of the Social Marketing AIDA Model

Attention (A)--Gaining Attention and Convincing

To draw attention to their role in collaboration, most, if not all of the student librarians in T1 first developed flyers that, in various ways, were distributed to faculty. This is a standard method of advertising new products and services; we used this technique to see if such an approach was feasible in a school environment. What we found was that the building librarians were very protective of how and where this was distributed. Because the student librarians were basically visitors in the school, they had very little say in this decision.

One building librarian would not allow the distribution, saying that the principal might not approve. Another librarian decided to allow it to go only to a selected group of teachers with whom the librarian had a collaborative relationship. For the most part, simply relying on flyers

Data also indicated that collaboration can be enhanced by libr

most successful projects occurred when a history of librarian-teacher collaboration was established and ongoing. Data from both the field tests (T1) and the focus group cohorts (T2) indicated that a history of collaborating with the librarians played an important role in teachers'

understanding of policy, and the personal preferences and management styles of their building-level principals.

Data from the focus groups showed an awareness of the effects of policy, procedures, and communication in fostering collaboration. The focus groups suggested the need for compromise and flexibility. These factors varied in the field test situations. In some situations, the teachers showed flexibility and willingly made needed compromises. In other cases, they did not because of personal preferences. In these cases, with a few exceptions, the needs of the teachers prevailed.

Communication

Mattessich and Monsey found process and structure requires both *frequent and open communication* and *informal and formal communication links* for collaboration success. We found this in our study as well. Both teachers and student librarians in T1 complained of the difficulty in meeting and getting messages to each other. In our study, communication generally consisted of regularly scheduled conferences and e-mails. Informal contacts proved problematic because of the scheduling of the student librarians at the school; as such, the student librarians were not often available for informal meetings with their collaborating teachers. The more successful projects occurred when both teachers and student librarians were willing to make adjustments so necessary meetings could occur. Problems occurred when either the teacher or the student librarian could not make these adjustments.

Shared Goals, Mission, and Purpose

A shared vision of goals and mission is necessary for success, according to the Mattessich and Monsey literature review. The field tests demonstrated this in several ways. Teachers were willing to participate in collaboration because they perceived it as helpful in improving student performance. They also appeared willing to collaborate to help both the building librarian and the student librarian in training, as a professional responsibility.

Data from the focus groups indicate that teachers clearly understood the goals and purposes of librarian-teacher collaboration and that they held a shared vision. Although Mattessich and Monsey noted that successful collaborations are fostered by a sense of unique purpose, we did not test for this predictor. Nevertheless, enthusiasm from the focus groups for collaboration suggested a feeling of uniqueness.

Resources and Convener

According to Mattessich and Monsey, a *financial base* is required for successful collaboration. In our study, we did not calculate a monetary cost from collaboration. Nonetheless, if staff time required for collaboration and staff needs are considered resources, then resource support becomes paramount. The data from our study indicated that both time factors and staffing are crucial to successful, ongoing collaboration--and that both are not readily available. Seavers (2002) noted the importance that staff time availability played in the success of collaboration. She, along with Martines (2005) and Mattessich and Monsey, recognized staff resources as necessary for successful collaboration.

Figure 1. A Teacher-Librarian Collaboration Model
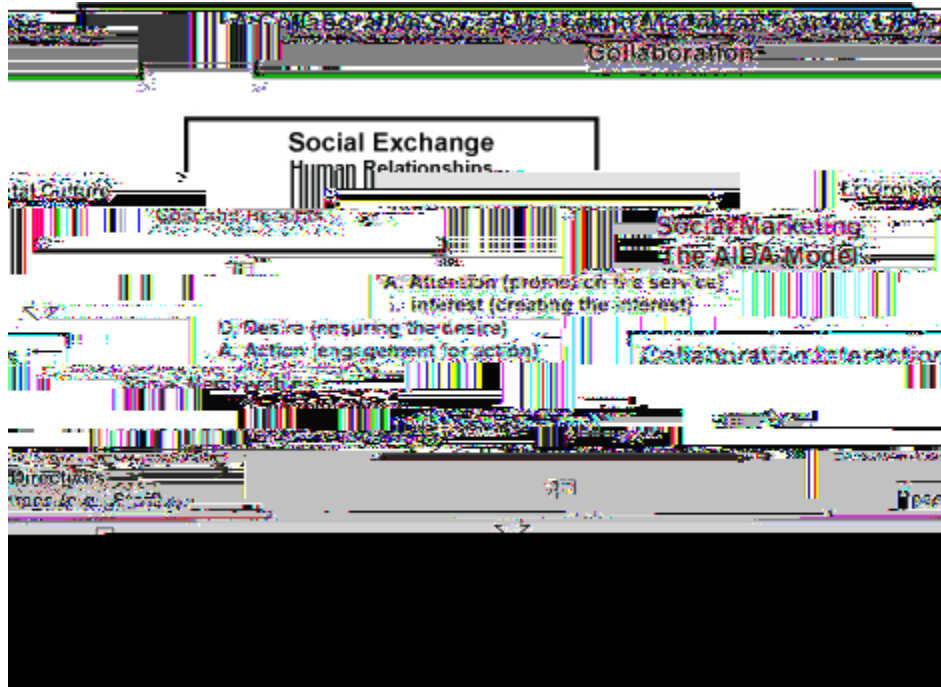
Conclusion

School librarians have a professional mandate and social expectation to collaboration with teachers. Collaboration promotes better teacher effectiveness and student learning, and it can advance the professional standing of the school librarian in a community of learners. Although there are several approaches that can advance collaboration with teachers, social marketing offers an approach that has been very effective in promoting and improving social good in many areas important to society and culture. Social marketing presents examples worth emulating.

Appendix 1. Sample of Information Literacy and Teacher Collaboration Project Instructions and Assessment Forms

1. Observational Records:

Please keep a formal diary of your observations about both yourself and your teacher behaviors as you proceed through this project. Divide your manual into the following sections and record your observ

6. Do you see any personal rewards or gratification for you from having engaged in this collaboration project? Comments

7. Would you be willing to ent anewards o2(l(nt)-2(a)4 6 >>BDC .)-1 Tf   33 0 Td   e3(e)4(w)2(r)3(sbd30(

Appendix 2. Case Report No. 1

Type of School: Elementary collaboration with second grade teacher.

Marketing: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action

Flyer produced interest from second grade teachers for this and project by extension the field supervisor as a result of the publicity and interaction of the teachers-librarian and teacher.

Flyer was good in alerting faculty to resources and services available in the library.

Social marketing help connect teachers to the library for collaboration.

Already existing social networked helped and perhaps even made this possible.

Marketing technique can best result from the targeting of one particular teacher?

Librarians must prove that collaboration is a values investment of time on part of the teacher

Librarians need to bring ideas and examples to teachers along with information that others have collaborated.

Student: Collaboration Project Reaction

Pleased with outcome. Students were observed able to execute research skill objectives of the lesson.

Student Interaction with Teacher

Helpful to know where the books were.

Willing to continue other collaborative projects with librarian

Would be willing to initiate collaboration project, librarians are helpful.

Librarian's collaboration and active teaching helps free her for TEKE skills

Collaborative project with librarians will help students by offering wider awareness

Reward came into giving more time for TEKE skills

Would be willing to collaborate on an equal basis

There may be social reward—not sure

Support from administration to continue collaboration projects

Would be effective in future in negotiate with librarians in collaboration.

Feels that librarians have experience and skills to work in coloration projects for instruction.

Promotion techniques for this project were fine.

Appendix 4. Case Analysis Category Sheet

Case no. _____

Type of School:

Milbury, P. 2005. Collaboration: Ten important reasons to take it seriously. *Knowledge Quest* 33(5): 30-32.

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School Library Media Research (ISSN: *1523-4320*) *is the successor to School Library Media Quarterly Online and the predecessor to School Library Research, an official journal of the American Association of School Librarians. The purpose of School Library Media Research is to promote and publish high quality original research concerning the management, implementation, and evaluation of school library programs. The journal also emphasizes research on instructional theory, teaching methods, and critical issues relevant to the school library profession. Visit the* **website** *for more information.*
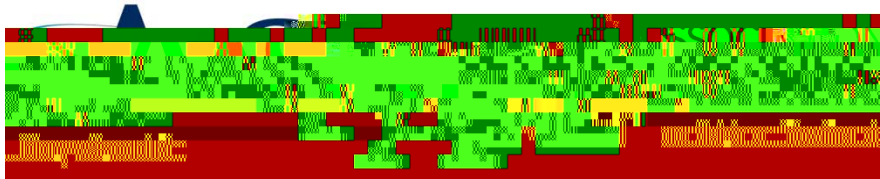
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