

Educating Pre-Service School Librarians for the Instructional Partner Role: An Exploration into University Curricula

Authors' Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Judi Moreillon, School of Library and Information Studies, Texas Woman's University, P. O. Box 425438, Denton, Texas 76204-5438. Contact: jmoreillon@twu.edu

Note: This research was presented for the School Library SIG at the American Educational Research Association (AERA)

suggest that the academy does not teach with a unified voice when it comes to helping pre-service school librarians prepare to practice the instructional partner role.

Introduction

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) prioritized the leader and instructional partnership roles of school librarians in *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs*. As an instructional partner, the school librarian “collaborates with classroom teachers” (2009, 17) and “understands the curriculum of the school thoroughly and can partner with teachers to create exciting learning experiences in an information- and media-rich environment” (2009, 19). Studies have shown that a positive correlation exists between student achievement and instructional collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers (Achterman 2008; Library Research Service 2013). School administrators correlate a successful educational program with an active, collaborative, and resourceful library program (Lance, Rodney, and Schwarz 2010). Audrey P. Church found strong support among elementary (2008) and secondary (2010) principals for the school librarian’s instructional partner role. School librarians who effectively practice instructional partnerships have opportunities to make a positive impact on student learning and on student achievement on standardized tests (Library Research Service 2013) and serve as leaders and ct

posrtice ifochool librarians wpsn tiibrari (r4(a)4(t)2.52 1.59d [(e)6((i)-2(on be)4(o)-10(gr)3())3(a)4(r)-7mect7(a

Most recently, in *Empowering Learners* AASL identified the instructional partner as the most critical role for the future of the profession. The theoretical framework that guided this study is built on the importance of the instructional partner role of school librarians as represented in the literature. The study is also founded on studies that address the essential role librarian preparation programs play in preparing pre-service school librarians for developing the skills and dispositions of an instructional partner.

first-hand “how-to” experiences in the March 2012 “Coteaching” issue of AASL’s *Knowledge Quest* journal. These articles provide the librarians’ and the classroom teachers’ or specialists’ perspectives on what made their coteaching experience successful for students and for educators. Along with other essays, research, and articles, a number of these coteaching expert pieces appear in the *Best of KQ: Instructional Partnerships: A Pathway to Leadership* (Moreillon and Ballard 2013). These examples show that instructional partnerships are valued by school librarians and classroom teachers alike and further support the national professional association’s

looks like and what makes it work” (Hammerness et al. 2005, 367). One could speculate that this reliance on preconceptions is also true of pre-service school librarians.

One of the challenges of pre-service education, then, is to prompt future educators to question their preconceived notions about what constitutes effective teaching and, in the case of this study, preconceived notions about the practice of instructional partnerships in the context of serving in the role of school librarian. The university classroom is a laboratory for the prional partn4CS0 cs 0 60

role(c)-6(a)4(t)-2(i)-2on((c)4(u)r3(s)-1ve)4(s)-1.dJs)-11(uit)-2(Ms)-2obrion()32.03
iveu(c)-6(a)4(t)-2(i)-2on((c)4(u)r3(s)-1ve)4(s)-1.dJs)-11(uit)-2(Ms)-2obrion()32.03

1. How does coursework offered in ALA-accredited and NCATE-accredited school librarian preparation programs support Master's candidates in developing the instructional partner role?
2. Is there a difference between these two types of programs?
3. How do educators of school librarians describe the support offered in their programs for developing the instructional partnership role?

Study Participants

Participation in the study was elicited from the membership of the Educators of School Librarians Section (ESLS) of AASL at various meetings between June 2012 and June 2013 and through the ESLS discussion list. In addition, members of the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) School Librarian (SL) Special Interest Group (SIG) who attended the ALISE annual meeting in January 2013 were invited to participate.

Survey Instrd to pC2(i)-2(on (.Tj 0i65f)e(.Tj 0.26 .8 Tm (.)Tj E

programs in the United States are accredited by ALA or NCATE (CAEP); therefore, the nine institutions that participated in this study represent 10.2 percent of the U.S. institutions that prepare school librarians.

Both qualitative research and descriptive statistics were collected through course materials rankings and a follow-up questionnaire. The instruments were developed by the researchers since no existing instruments were in the literature. The three researchers collaborated on the writing of the ranking and questionnaire items to ensure that they were reliable and had a high level of content validity. The researchers also shared these instruments with their respective school librarian educator colleagues.

Data collection was facilitated via e-mail. Faculty who teach in school librarian preparation programs reported the title and number of courses designed for school librarian candidates only and rated each course designed exclusively for school librarian candidates in terms of the percentage of readings and assignments that focused specifically on the instructional partner role. The researchers provided a sample program of study that included an explanation of the ratings. Participants also responded to a follow-

Teacher

Crowley, John. D. 2011. *Developing a Vision: Strategic Planning for the School Librarian in the 21st Century*, 2nd ed. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Farmer, Lesley S. J. 2011. *Instructional Design for Librarians and Information Professionals*. New York: Neal-Schuman.

Johnson, Doug A. 2013.

ALA-Accredited Schools

Programs and Courses

Table 3 provides background information on the four programs that comprise the ALA program case for this study.

Table 3. Information about ALA-accredited programs studied.

	Unit	# Courses	Dual ALA-NCATE Accreditation
A1	COE	3	No
A2	iSchool	7	Yes
A3	SLIS	4	Yes
A4	COE	5	Yes

Rankings of Roles

In the follow-up questionnaire, ALA-accredited schools ranked five AASL-designated roles as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Rankings of the roles by participants from ALA-accredited programs.

Role	Rankings	Mean
Leader	1, 3, 5, 5	3.5
Instructional Partner	1, 1, 2, 3	1.75
Information Specialist	1, 2, 4, 5	3
Teacher	2, 3, 4, 4	3.25
Program Administrator	2, 3, 4, 5	3.5

Overall, participants from ALA-accredited schools ranked the role of instructional partner the highest followed by information specialist and then teacher. The roles of program administrator and leader both averaged a 3.5 ranking. Two schools gave instructional partner the top ranking, and no schools ranked it lower than third. Leader and teacher also received a first ranking by one program. The roles of teacher and instructional partner were never ranked last.

Readings and Textbooks in ALA Programs

When responding to the follow-up question regarding exemplary readings, one ALA-accredited program cited a book and two cited book chapters. Like one of the NCATE programs, one ALA-accredited program cited an article that appeared in *School Library Research*: “Toward a Theory of Collaboration” (Montiel-Overall 2005). One ALA program identified the “Coteaching” issue of *Knowledge Quest* (Moreillon and Ballard 2012). Another ALA-accredited program cited a YouTube video “Highly Effective School Librarians Are Master Teachers” (Colorado State Library 2011).

In the follow-up questionnaire, one ALA-accredited program reported no specific textbook and pointed to the exemplary readings cited in question #2 of that program’s questionnaire. Unlike the NCATE-accredited schools, none of the ALA programs cited *Empowering Learners* as an exemplary text for the purpose of teaching the instructional partner role. Listed below are the textbooks and book chapters ALA-accredited programs cited.

ALA Program Textbooks

Buzzeo, Toni. 2008a. *The Collaboration Handbook*. Columbus, OH: Linworth.

Fontichiaro, Kristin. ed. 2009. *21st-Century Learning in School Libraries*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Harada, Violet H., and Joan M. Yoshina. 2010. *Assessing for Learning: Librarians and Teachers as Partners*, 2nd ed. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Moreillon, Judi. 2013b. *Coteaching Reading Comprehension Strategies in Elementary School Libraries: Maximizing Your Impact*. Chicago: ALA.

Moreillon, Judi. 2012. *Coteaching Reading Comprehension Strategies in Secondary School Libraries: Maximizing Your Impact*. Chicago: ALA.

ALA Program Book Chapters

Donham, Jean. 2008. "Collaborative Planning." In *Enhancing Teaching and Learning: A Leadership Guide for School Library Media Specialists*, 2nd ed. by Jean Donham. New York: Neal-Schuman.

McGregor, Joy. 2003. "Collaboration and Leadership." In *Curriculum Connections through the Library* edited by Barbara K. Stripling and Sandra Hughes-Hassell. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Exemplary Assignment in ALA Programs

As in the NCATE-accredited programs, the collaborative lesson or unit plan was cited by all four of the study participants from ALA-accredited programs. In one ALA program, candidates conduct this assignment with classroom teachers in the field. In two ALA programs, this assignment involves collaboration with both a school librarian and a classroom teacher in the

course title concerned with collaboration, curriculum, or the IP role while only two of the five NCATE programs offered a course titled as such.

Participants were asked, “Please rank the five roles of the school librarian in terms of the values of your school librarian preparation program: leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator.” ALA-accredited programs were more likely to rank the role of instructional partner first while NCATE-accredited schools gave a slight edge to the role of teacher and were more likely to rank the role of instructional partner as second. No program ranked the IP role last. On the other hand, the rankings of program administrator were never first yet ranged from 2 to 5. Looking across all of the programs, there seems to be agreement that the role of instructional partner is never last and the role of program administrator is never first. Beyond that there was little consensus across programs about the rankings of these roles.

The Instructional Partner Role in Empowering Learners

These findings about the instructional partner role in the preparation of school librarians and particularly the lack of consensus related to the ranking of the roles in the various programs led us to wonder about how the role was treated in *Empowering Learners*. We conducted a content analysis of those guidelines looking for mentions of each of the roles. Table 5 shows the frequency and page numbers where each role was explicitly mentioned. Pages 16–18 contain the introduction and discussion of the roles, and multiple roles are mentioned in a single sentence on pages 19 and 46. Beyond that, few individual mentions of any one role were found.

Table 5. Frequency of role term mentions in *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (AASL 2009a).

Term

the school librarian. To this list of roles, *Empowering Learners* adds “leader.” Yet as one combs through the remainder of the document, the term “instructional partner” is rarely used except in sentences that group the roles together. For example in this discussion of leadership, *Empowering Learning* states, “Leading librarians embrace these challenges and opportunities to empower learning through their roles as *instructional partners*, information specialists, teachers, and program administrators” (AASL 2009a, 46).

It is also the case that a role in *Empowering Learners* may have been implied without a direct reference. For example, collaboration and partnering with classroom teachers are aspects of the instructional partner role and are given frequent mention throughout the chapters. Yet one has to conclude that it’s difficult for a reader to extract explicit guidance about any one of the roles, ,

- _____. 2006. *Position Statement on the Value of Library Media Programs in Education*.
<www.ala.org/PrinterTemplate.cfm?Section=Position_Statements&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=15851> (accessed July 14, 2014).
- _____. 2007. "Standards for the 21st-Century Learner."

- Ballard, Susan, and Kristin Fontichiaro. 2010. "More than Shushing and Shelving: School Librarians are Important Allies in Helping Students Become Scholars and Problem-solvers." *Principal Leadership* 11 (4): 50–54.
- Bishop, Kay. 2007. "The Curriculum." In *The Collection Program in Schools: Concepts, Practices, and Information Sources*, 4th ed. by Kay Bishop. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Buzzeo, Toni. 2008a. *The Collaboration Handbook*. Columbus, OH: Linworth.
- Buzzeo, Toni. 2008b. "Make the Move from Collaboration to Data-Driven Collaboration." *Library Media Connection* 27 (3): 28–31.
- Colorado State Library. 2011. "Highly Effective School Librarians Are Master Teachers." <<http://tinyurl.com/pwguyf5>> (accessed July 14, 2014).
- Crow, Sherry R. 2005. "Collaboration: The Heart of Information Literacy." In *Information Literacy: A Guide for the Library Media Specialist*

McGregor, Joy H. 2003. "Collaboration and Leadership." 74r, Je

Appendix A: Program of Study Rankings Directions

From the recruitment email: After you read, sign, and return [the Consent to Participate Form] to us, we will ask you to email us a copy of your program of study that includes:

1. Your name and email contact information at the top of the program of study document.
2. For the courses listed on your document that are **targeted** to school librarian candidates, we are asking that you rate each one in terms of readings and collaborative course assignments. The rating scale follows.
3. We are also asking you to indicate “yes” or “no” if you are willing to participate in a follow-up questionnaire that will include questions to clarify your ratings in terms of readings and course assignments.

For the purposes of this study, educating for the instructional partner role is defined as “developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to jointly plan and implement standards-based lessons and units of study with classroom teachers and specialists.”

Rating Scale for courses targeted to school librarians:

Readings: percentage of course readings or viewings that promote the instructional partner role of school librarians:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Assignments: percentage of assignments in which candidates work as collaborative partners or in a collaborative small group in order to complete an assignment

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rating Scale Key:

0 = zero to 9% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 1 = 10 to 19% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 2 = 20 to 29% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 3 = 30 to 39% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 4 = 40 to 49% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 5 = 50 to 59% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 6 = 60 to 69% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 7 = 70 to 79% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 8 = 80 to 89% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 9 = 90 to 99% of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role
 10 = ALL of the course readings/assignments address the instructional partner role

Note: In an ALA-accredited program, for example, school librarian candidates may take many courses that are designed for librarians serving in all types of library settings. Do not include these courses in your ratings. Only include courses **designed for school librarian candidates**.

Please see the attached sample.

The mission of the American Association of School Librarians is to advocate excellence,