

CREATING THE PERFECT TEAM

THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST & CLASSROOM TEACHERS

As school library media specialists we have many jobs - teacher, curriculum specialist, collection developer, cataloger, manager, technician, story teller, researcher . . . and the list goes on! It is a constant struggle to maintain balance between our many roles. All too often some responsibilities have to take a back seat to those that are considered most important or pressing at the time. I believe that our essential duty as school library media specialists is to support and promote the academic achievement of students. A key element of this goal is creating a collection that not only supports the curriculum of our schools, but also reflects our students' interests. This in itself can be a fulltime job!

This past year I opened a new school and it provided me not only the challenge that I was looking for, but also the opportunity to develop a collection from the very beginning stage. It all begins with the curriculum. I feel that in order to provide staff and students the best collection to serve their needs, I first need to be a curriculum expert. This is to be familiar with all of the standards that teachers are responsible for teaching and in turn what are the expectations for student learning. I chose Bound to Stay Bound as the main vendor for my opening day collection because I had a previous positive working relationship with them. They provided me with suggested titles based on reviews and curriculum standards. They also offered many online services that were invaluable because I could create booklists and access them at work and at home. But the suggested titles only served as a starting point for me. I then worked over the next few months using the state curriculum, talking with teachers and looking at student interests to guide me in creating a useful curriculum driven collection.

Throughout this new school year, collection development has been a top priority for me. I keep the state curriculum for all grade levels on my desk at all times for consultation. I continually work with the teachers to find out what they are

teaching and where they feel that we need more materials to support student learning. It is this collaboration and communication that helps me identify where our collection needs to grow. Anytime a teacher comes in with a subject that I do not have enough resources to support, I automatically make note of it. In order to keep up to date with children's literature

I read reviews, browse bookstores, read online listservs such as LM_NET, communicate with colleagues, use online tools such as curriculum search and collection analysis, participate in professional organizations, talk to my students, meet with teachers and of course read constantly. I also attend conferences for professional growth sessions and to visit publishers to see what new titles are forthcoming that might interest my students and teachers. I often return home with a suitcase full of advanced reader's copies! As a result of all these efforts, I have compiled an extensive database that includes titles that I would like to purchase and subject areas of need. This database then serves as a guide for my decision making process for all new purchases.

The best things you can do to develop a useful collection for your school are know the curriculum, communicate with teachers, listen to students and finally read, read, read!

Melissa Johnston, Media Specialist for Silver City Elementary School in Cumming, GA is a 2007 Library Journal Mover and Shaker, recipient of the 2006-2007 Georgia Library Media Specialist of the Year Award and 2006 Georgia Department of Education Exemplary Library Media Program Winner.

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To find out how Bound To Stay Bound can help you and your faculty with collection development and enhancement, visit the BTSB Bookstore at www.btsb.com and view the many search and selection tools available to you. For more articles of interest to librarians, go to the Library Corner area of the website and select the link to The More You Know.

