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What's working? A case study of an exemplary school library district program in a 1:1 device setting

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Title

What's working? A case study of an exemplary school library district program in a 1:1 device setting

Abstract

The role of the school librarian (SL) is evolving to better meet the needs of a school in an increasingly digital learning environment. This case study research of an exemplary district-level library program in the United States, explores what is working by examining the valued competencies of SLs and contextual factors that enable strong library programs in 1:1 device settings. The findings suggest that SLs are expected to be change agents, relationship builders, curriculum developers, and creators of virtual library services. Critical contextual factors are district buy-in, rebranding, and an integrated approach to library services. The findings could inform curricular improvements for educator preparation programs and professional developers as well as increase SLs' understanding of how they can strengthen their own practice and raise administrators' awareness of the powerful ways they can support the school community.

Keywords: school librarians, school libraries, exemplary program, case study, 1:1 device program

Introduction

The role of the school librarian (SL) is complex. They are expected to develop a leadership identity in the school (Dotson & Jones, 2011; Johnston, 2015; Kimmel, Howard, & Ruzzi, 2016), advocate their skills and value to faculty and administration (Burns, 2015), design curriculum, provide in-service training (Gavigan & Lance, 2015), and co-teach (Gavigan & Lance, 2015; Moreillon, 2013). They must also fulfill their traditional roles as reading motivators (Gavigan & Lance, 2015; Merga, 2020b), literacy educators (Merga, 2020b; Moreillon, 2021), and teachers (Gavigan & Lance, 2015).

The role of the SL is also evolving. SLs are being asked to broaden their areas of expertise by supporting a wider range of literacies. To support Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) literacies, they are incorporating computational thinking, coding (Taylor, Moore, Visser, & Drouillard, 2018), makerspaces (Moorefield-Lang, 2015), and science projects into the library program (Dow, 2014; Subramaniam et al., 2015). SLs also have a role to play in supporting social emotional learning (Himmelstein, 2019; Merga, 2020a) as well as mental health literacy (Adkins, Brendler, Maras, & Townsend, 2019). As the model for effective kindergarten through grade 12 (K12) education is being reevaluated using lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, there are likely more places where the SL's role can evolve.

The integration of technology into education has also increased the complexity of the role and prompted changes in library services. The Consortium for School Networks (CoSN, 2019) projected that by 2021 95% of all districts in the United States will provide at least one device for student learning. School districts are defined as geographical units such as towns or counties that are charged with administrating the public schools that are situated within that area.

Increased access to technology offers opportunities for remote learning, the need for flexible learning spaces, access to robust digital resources, and shifts in instructional strategies. As a result, it is commonly accepted that the demand for technology expertise will continue to influence the role of the SL (Calvert, 2016; DeGroot & Branch-Mueller, 2011; Dotson & Jones, 2011; Johnston, 2012, 2015; NBTPS, 2012; Wine, 2016).

This phenomenon creates a challenge for school library educator preparation programs who must keep their curriculum relevant. It is important to understand what is currently vital because districts are reporting that it is difficult to find people with the qualifications they seek who are certified SLs (Kachel & Lance, 2018).

As a new faculty member and coordinator of a master's in library and information studies school library degree program in the United States, I wanted to update the curriculum based on current trends and needs. This study was designed to explore the perceived knowledge, skills and dispositions of strong SLs and the contextual factors enabling success in a 1:1 device program environment at an exemplary school district in the United States. 1:1 device programs are when districts issue every student a computer device to use for learning.

This study is significant because the findings could help educator preparation programs revise their curriculum to stay relevant. The findings could also help SLs increase their understanding of how they can strengthen their own practice and raise administrators' awareness of the powerful ways they can support the school community. Although the data for this study was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I argue that the valued knowledge and skills of a SL and contextual factors that support learning in a 1:1 device district are just as relevant in the aftermath. During the pandemic, districts were forced to implement 1:1 programs to ensure all students had access to learning. The lessons learned about educational technology integration

during the pandemic are likely relevant in face-to-face and hybrid learning now that students are back in schools.

To gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and contextual factors evident in an exemplary district school library program, this research is guided by the following questions:

- 1) What knowledge, skills, and dispositions are valued today for SLs to better meet the needs of a 1:1 device program school district?
- 2) What contextual factors are district library programs prioritizing to better increase their impact on the school community and how are they doing it?

Literature Review

Past studies have yielded some important insights into the knowledge and skills of exemplary SLs. The findings indicate that they are excellent teachers who create student-centered, engaging learning environments (Bush & Jones, 2010; Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009). They are instructional partners who collaborate with teachers (Bush & Jones, 2010; Jones & Long, 2016; Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009; Lewis, 2021; Marcoux & Loertscher, 2014) and maximize teaching and learning opportunities in the library (Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009; Lewis, 2021). According to Marcoux and Loertscher (2014), exemplary SLs also tend to have high technology skills.

Exemplary SLs are school leaders who take on broader educational roles in the school (Jones & Long, 2016; Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009), such as curriculum leaders (Lewis, 2021; Marcoux & Loertscher, 2014) and as technology integration leaders (Elbasri, 2018; Johnston, 2012). Expert SLs build library programs that are a “vital part of the curriculum and learning process” (Marcoux & Loertscher, 2014, p. 35) by providing cross-curricular support or

integration of curriculum (Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009). Phillips and Lee (2019) noted that school librarians are identified as leaders who take responsibility for teaching digital citizenship in collaboration with classroom teachers. They should also be able to connect the library program to the principal's agenda (Shannon, 2002) and the district strategic plan (Lewis, 2021).

Several studies have explored the dispositions of expert SLs. Dispositions in this study are defined as the professional attitudes, values, and beliefs of educators (Bush & Jones, 2010). Researchers suggest that SLs are highly adaptable (Jones & Long, 2016; Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009), creative, critical thinkers (Bush & Jones, 2010), enthusiastic about what they do (Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009), and compassionate and caring (Jones & Long, 2016). They are change agents, risk takers, and invested in school reform (Shannon, 2002). Kimmel, Dickinson, & Doll (2012) identified dispositions of SL leadership which includes embracing diversity, willing to change, being proactive, and curious.

Shannon's (2002) literature review on the competencies of SLs, found that strong interpersonal and communications skills are foundational to all aspects school library work. Effective SLs are able to communicate the mission, vision, goals, accomplishments, and contributions of their school library programs. Furthermore, she proposes that strong communication skills are associated with obtaining financial support for the library.

Scholars have also suggested that exemplary SLs create warm and welcoming environments. Model SLs embrace the learning commons concept and create welcoming, safe spaces (Marcoux & Loertscher, 2014). They also have excellent people skills (Shannon, 2002) and are able to change "their manner of approach to suit the styles of the teachers with whom they worked and the current school context" (Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009, p. 124). Also, along these lines, Lewis (2021) observed that the ability for SLs to establish trusting

relationships with administrators, principals, and teachers enable them to be seen and valued as instructional leaders.

Previous studies have pointed out that contextual factors play a role in the effectiveness of SLs. Klinger, Lee, and Stephenson (2009) suggest that “board level policies and supports, school funding and staffing, administrative supports, student demographics, principal and teacher knowledge [and] teacher librarian experience and skills” determine the success of the SL. Principals in particular, play a significant role in supporting SLs as leaders. For example, the principal’s knowledge and perception of the roles of the SL (Lewis, 2021; Marcoux & Loertscher, 2014) and their support of professional learning (Lewis, 2021) are factors for SLs to be effective leaders. Johnston (2012) also identified that a supportive principal is the most important enabling factor for SLs to take on the role of a leader of technology integration.

This study will add to the existing research base about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of exemplary school librarians and the contextual factors that support a school library program’s success. However, it will also add new knowledge by examining those factors in the context of an award winning school library district in a 1:1 device setting.

Method

This research project is designed as a single case study of an exemplary district school library program. The single case design was selected because it follows Lin’s (2009) rationale for “an extreme or unique case” (p. 47), meaning that it is worthwhile to document and analyze a single case that is more rare. In this study, the case selected represents both an extreme and a unique case. It is unique because only five districts have won the AASL National School Library of the Year awards since 2008 and a change in leadership provided a fresh vision, mission, and strategic plan. The case is extreme because it represents an exemplary case. The study was

conducted as a solo research project. I was provided funding by my university for travel and transcription services as part of my new hire package to support my research. The study was approved by my university Internal Review Board.

The case study protocol I developed established data collection procedures such as the names of the sites visited and contact person, a list of the roles of people to be interviewed, and the identification on-site visits (Yin, 2009). Data was collected from multiple sources of evidence: interviews, observations, and documents. The strength of interviews is that they focus directly on the case study topic and can be insightful. Direct observations show events in real time and provide context. Documents such as the district strategic plan, district website, photos, and the AASL award proposal corroborate and augment evidence from the interviews and site visits (Yin 2009).

Setting

The Bristol County Public School (BCPS) (pseudonym) district was chosen as an exemplary case because of winning the prestigious American Association of School Librarians National School Library of the Year Award (NSLYA). The award can be given to an individual school library or a district library program. The BCPS district is the 3rd largest in the state with 175 schools, each staffed with a full-time equivalent school librarian. Approximately 115,000 students are enrolled. Minorities represent the majority and almost half the student population receives free or reduced lunch indicating a low-income level. See Table 2 for a demographic profile of the students.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Student Enrollment

| Demographic Characteristic of Student | Percent of total enrollment |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Black or African American | 39.5 |
| White | 35.9 |

| | |
|---|------|
| Hispanic | 11.9 |
| Asian | 7.1 |
| Two or more races | 5.0 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | .4 |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | .1 |
| Receive Special Education Services | 13 |
| Eligible for free or reduced-price meals | 48.7 |
| English Language Learners | 7.1 |

Due to a change in leadership, the district developed a new vision and strategic plan. A major goal of the plan was to bring teaching and learning into the 21st century by implementing a 1:1 device program; shifting from teacher centered to student centered learning; and providing resource rich, virtual and in person learning environments. These goals were compelling contextual elements that make this study distinctive.

The district has a library program leadership team of five staff members who supervise and support the 175 school librarians in the district. The library program staff consists of a Coordinator who is the leader of the team, two “Resource Teachers” that support the everyday needs of the 175 SLs in the district, a “Specialist” who has supervisory responsibilities such as performance evaluation and professional development, and a “Facilitator” who supports Destiny, video production, and other technology resources. All members of the team are certified SLs except for the Facilitator who is a certified classroom teacher. The Library Program staff is housed physically and conceptually within the district technology department. Their proximity facilitates collaborative efforts to implement the district’s reform initiatives.

Participants

Upon approval by the BCPS school committee, I contacted the Coordinator of the Library Program to help recruit participants for the study. The purposive selection was based on my case study protocol to capture multiple perspectives of individuals with high knowledge of the school

library program. I wanted to interview SLs, district and building administrators, teachers, and the technology department. I chose to include two public librarians because of the substantial partnership they had with the district in resource sharing and reading support. Triangulating data from diverse viewpoints helps to ensure the quality and credibility of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002).

The coordinator sent out an invitation email I composed to people who fit the categories of the roles I wanted to interview and who had high knowledge of the library program. Since the participants were recruited to talk about their award-winning school library program, there could be social desirability bias in their responses. To mitigate this, I assured them the interviews were confidential and brought up questions in a conversational style that invited them to also talk about challenges as well as successes. I also took the stance of empathetic neutrality to help them feel like they could be honest with their responses (Patton, 2002).

Twenty-seven individuals participated: 18 females and nine males. The participants who worked in the district had between two and 26 years of experience. The Library Program Coordinator helped arrange the dates, times and locations of the interviews and site visits over a two-day period. All interviews were conducted in BCPS buildings except for the public librarian interview which was held at the main branch. Signed consent forms were obtained prior to the interviews.

Individual interviews were scheduled with two district administrators, two principals, and two high performing school librarians to get in-depth data on their perceptions and experiences. The position title of the interviewees rather than their name is used when reporting the findings from individual interviews.

Group interviews were conducted with the technology department, the Library Program staff, two high school teachers, nine K-12 SLs and two public librarians. Interviewing groups is an efficient way to gather data from a larger representation of participants within a short time constraint. Group interview responses were combined and reported out using the name of the group rather than the names or titles of individuals in the group. Table 2 provides contextual information about the participants.

Table 2: Participant List

| Abbreviations used to report findings | Position and description | # of participants | Female | Male |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------|--------|------|
| DIST ADMIM | District Administrator – works with teachers and building level administrators to run schools. | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| DIST CURR LDR | District English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum Leader – oversees coordinating the ELA curriculum, providing support, and promoting collaboration | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| TECH DEPT | Innovating Learning and Technology Department – supports the integration of technology and digital library resources in teaching and learning and collaborates with the Library Program Staff to ensure every student develops 21 st century skills. | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| LIB PROG STAFF | Library Program Staff – provides leadership for the SL program across the district and ensures teachers and students have access to high quality library programs | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| HS PRIN | High School Principal (Grades 9-12) – oversees higher-level operations in a school | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| MS PRIN | Middle School Principal (Grades 6-8) - oversees higher-level operations in a school | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| HSLIB | High School Librarian (Grades 9-12) | 1 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|----------|--|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| MSLIB | Middle School Librarian (Grades 6-8) | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| SL GROUP | School Librarian Group (Elementary = Kindergarten-grade 5, Middle School = grades 6-8, High School = grades 9-12) | 4 Elementary 3 Middle 2 High | 4 1 2 | 0 2 0 |
| HS Ts | High School Teachers (Grades 9-12) | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| PL | Public Librarians – partners in substantial initiatives such as resource sharing and reading engagement | 2 | 2 | |
| Totals | | 27 | 18 | 9 |

Data Collection

The data for this study came from semi-structured individual and group interviews, on-site observations, and relevant documents available on the web.

Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information because they provide rich data (Yin, 2009). Eleven focused one-hour semi-structured interviews in total were conducted. Separate lists of interview questions were developed for the SLs, administrators, teachers, technology department and public librarians (See Appendix A). Interviews were also allowed to develop organically as the interview progressed. The interview questions were designed to ask similar questions across groups that aligned to the research questions such as: what do you perceive to be the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of exemplary SLs? Some lists had questions unique to that group. For example, the teachers were asked about specific collaborative projects they engaged in with the school library program. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

On-site observations were conducted at an elementary school library during a lesson where students were presenting research projects to their peers. Observations of a middle school

and high school library were done in the form of facility tours and included a focused interview with the SLs at each site. Field notes and photos were taken at the on-site visits. In the SL GROUP interview, participants responded to questions orally but also engaged in activities where they wrote down responses to questions such as: What knowledge, skills, and dispositions are important for SLs? This activity allowed for responses from everyone in a time constrained situation.

Data Analysis

The transcripts were read multiple times and inductively analyzed to produce a framework for organizing and describing the data collected (Patton, 2002). During the first few readings, I used color coding and margin notes to identify common patterns. Subsequent analysis was done to develop categories. A spreadsheet was used to organize quotes selected from each transcript by category. The categories were then analyzed across the transcripts and common themes emerged for each research question. Documents, notes, and photos from on-site visits were examined to confirm and/or expand on the interview findings. See Tables 3 and 4 for the categories and themes that were developed during the analysis by research question.

Table 3. Themes and Categories for RQ1

| Themes | Categories |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| School Leader | Change agent |
| | Relationship builder |
| | Instructional partner |
| Teacher Librarian | Exceptional teacher |
| | Jack of all trades |
| | Creator of welcoming space |
| Content Area Expert | Multiliteracies |
| | Technology |
| | Reading promotion |

Table 4. Categories and Themes for RQ2

| Themes | Categories |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| Culture | Leadership buy-in |
| | Rebranding |
| | Continuous Learning |
| Curriculum | Embedded Resources |
| | Integrated Library Instruction |
| | Virtual learning |

Trustworthiness

I acknowledge that as a former SL and current educator of preservice SLs, my predispositions and biases may affect data analysis and findings (Patton, 2002). To establish credibility of the findings, I triangulated the data with multiple sources, interviewed people from diverse positions who interacted with the school library program, and reviewed the findings with a peer. Although these activities strengthen the quality of the study, one limitation is that member checking was not conducted due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. I addressed transferability by using thick, rich descriptions of the case.

Findings

Each of the themes will be discussed within the context of their associated research question as outlined in Tables 3 and 4.

Research Question 1: What Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions are Valued Today for SLs to Better Meet the Needs of a 1:1 Device Program School District?

The findings for RQ1 are reported under the three broad themes, a) School Leaders, b) Teacher Librarian, and c) Content Area Expert. (See Table 3.)

School Leader

Change agent. An overarching theme expressed by the administrators was that SLs need to be change agents, people who believed in the school initiatives and had the dispositions and skills to be help make change happen. The HS PRIN described it as, “champions of change.” The

HS PRIN stated, "we hired [the MSLIB] because the expectation was, okay, here you go, here's what I want. You go and make it happen." When asked about what dispositions SLs need today, many interviewees mentioned visionary, creative, not afraid to try new things, perseverance, motivation and innovative, traits of a change agent. The LIB PROG STAFF commented on the need "to be able to navigate change and have an interest in redefinition." The LIB PROG STAFF acknowledged that this was a critical disposition, especially in the context of the new strategic plan of implementing a 1:1 device program and shifting to a student-centered pedagogy.

Relationship builder. Relationship building, the ability to make connections with others, was referred to across the interviews. The HS PRIN said, "we want that person (SL) that can establish relationships not just with students, but with teachers, with community members." The DIST ADMIN explained, "They would have to go out and make those relationships...and show that you have something to give." The MS PRIN valued the MSLIB's relationship building effort, "I think [MSLIB] has done a really good job of trying to become part of the faculty." The HS PRIN added that building relationships with students was important, "what she has to offer is get to know them (students) outside of just coming in and checking out a book and then leaving."

The SL GROUP also indicated that to be effective, SLs must have relationship building dispositions such as being friendly, responsive and a good listener. The LIB PROG STAFF modeled relationship building by working with district leaders, peers, SLs and outside organizations such as the public library, state library office, and local educator preparation program to raise awareness and strengthen the library program. Across interview groups, it became apparent that building relationships is one way to promote and create strong school library programs that can support district learning initiatives.

Instructional partners. There was an expectation that SLs need to take the initiative in collaborating with teachers to co-plan and co-teach lessons together. The TECH DEPT stated, “going to a department chair and asking about what things are coming up or working directly with teachers to coteach a lesson so there’s a resources avenue. But that’s proactivity and that’s push-in instead of wait.”

The DIST CURR LDR also explained how collaboration was happening district wide due to the 1:1 device initiative, “the librarian was also able to push into the classroom because kids had the computers, and they could help teach that lesson.’ She also described how her curriculum team had “partnered many more times with... the media specialist in the schools. We worked a lot with them through digital literacy.”

She further elaborated that co-teaching research skills was also part of the curriculum: “even in some of our research modules that are designed for classroom teachers in content areas, you have to work with your library media specialist, there’s no other way to do it.” These findings illustrate that BCPS administrators perceived SLs as valued instructional partners with expertise in digital resources, digital literacy, and research instruction.

Teacher Librarian

Exceptional teacher. Administrators expected SLs to be expert teachers. In addition, the TECH DEPT team repeatedly stated the importance of the SL as a teacher by stating “first and foremost, they’re a teacher” and “a school library media specialist needs to be an exceptional teacher.” Since the TECH DEPT was also responsible for innovative learning initiatives in the district, seeing SLs as teachers first, elevated their position as critical partners in achieving the district’s goals.

Jack of all trades. Many participants described SLs as “a jack of all trades,” meaning, someone who had the ability to do all different types of work. Depending on the resources and priorities of individual schools, the desired skills for SLs varied. SLs could run television studios for morning announcements, offer video production activities with green screens, implement makerspace programs, provide professional development and even be an ambassador of a school’s mission to internal and external stakeholders. To support SLs competencies in meeting each school’s particular needs, the LIB PROG STAFF provided appropriate training and/or leveraged the skills SLs already had.

Creator of welcoming spaces. SLs were expected to redesign the space to make it more student friendly and inviting. The MSLIB commented that his traditional library space was “not a fun and inviting spot” and “so a big push has been to make it more student centered.” They created space for cozy furniture, displays that “popped,” played music, implemented student self-check-out stations, and displayed welcoming messages on promethium boards. When asked about their interior design experience, both the HSLIB and MSLIB said they had no formal training. To overcome this, the HSLIB shared that she collaborated with students in the Interior Design vocational program and the MSLIB consulted Pinterest, a social media platform where participants share creative ideas. These comments suggest that space redesign is a skill that could be more emphasized in educator preparation programs and professional development..

The ability for student to interact with the space also helped make the library more inviting. For example, the LIB PROG STAFF stated that there is “interactivity built into the space...with book displays and things like that where it’s actually the students who are leaving little book review cards or putting them up on post its... that’s another way of having it be the students’ space.”

In addition to creating welcoming physical library spaces, SLs developed virtual spaces and pushed out library services to better serve student needs in a 1:1 device context. The TECH DEPT explained:

the librarian has to understand today, that the library is a physical space and isn't a physical space. So what kind of resources, what kind of supports do you need to provide that allow everybody to understand ninety percent of what used to be the library experience, you don't need to be in the library to do.

The MS PRIN echoed this sentiment: "I don't want the library to be within these four walls, I want the library to kind of extend out to the classrooms. I want you to bring the information to the staff." These findings illustrate what SLs are doing to make their outdated physical space more welcoming and student friendly. The shift to a 1:1 environment prioritized developing the library as a virtual space and bringing services to students since they did not have to come to the library for computers anymore.

Content Area Expert

Multiliteracies. A common theme across interviews was that SLs should be experts in multiliteracies, which includes information, technology, digital and media literacy skills as well as the soft skills of communication, collaboration, and problem solving. The DIST ADMIN described, "they [SLs] should be the experts in the building in 21st century literacy...not just media, information and technology skills but when you think about helping kids learn those critical soft skills of communication and collaboration and creativity and problem solving.

The MS PRIN acknowledged: "[Librarians are] more important than ever that...with social media and our kids not being able to use it and understanding...I can take pictures with my phone, but I don't know how to really conduct good research." Both administrators recognize the important role SLs can have in students' development of multiliteracies to support college, career, and life skills in an increasingly digital world.

Technology. SLs need to be experts in technology, meaning why and how to use technology devices and digital resources in teaching and learning. They were described as “digital divas” and “technologists.” Technology competency was a high priority because the district was in the middle of rolling out a 1:1 device program to 175 schools. Administrators wanted teachers to perceive SLs as technology experts and approach them for support. The DIST ADMIN stated, “I want teachers to be able to go to them and say how do I do this?” The HS Ts affirmed that “the librarians are seen as some of the technology experts and can share ways of making a video or using this resource, or what is the best way to share your findings on a project or something.” Having both high-level administrators and classroom teachers recognize the value of SLs and their technology skills shows that the SLs in the district are doing a good job keeping their skills relevant and promoting them to a wide audience.

Promoter of reading. SLs are trained to engage students in reading by developing collections for the diverse interests and needs of students; promoting reading and books through displays, events and read alouds; as well as providing reading recommendations. Although traditional read alouds were not part of the K-5 Library media curriculum, the LIB PROG STAFF described how SLs promoted reading in other ways. SLs hosted virtual and in-person author visits, offered book tasting events, and brought books to students in non-traditional ways such as book check out carts in the lunchroom. They also created book displays, encouraged student book review activities, and facilitated book clubs.

There was also a districtwide push to diversify the collection using the Sims (1990) Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors metaphor. One goal of the LIB PROG STAFF was to genrefy the collections in elementary and middle schools to make it easier for students to find

what they wanted to read. These activities are evidence that reading promotion was still a priority, it is just more complex than traditional read alouds.

Research Q2. What contextual factors are district library programs prioritizing to better increase their impact on the school community and how are they doing it?

The findings for RQ2 are reported under the two broad themes, a) Culture, and b) Curriculum (See Table 4.).

Culture

Leadership buy-in. Leaders buy into an idea when they value and believe in the benefits of it for the organization. The DIST ADMIN bought into the school library program and understood that the move to a student centered pedagogy provided a natural opportunity to elevate the role of the SL:

two things really sort of launched, for us, this vision and framework around how we were going to move our teaching and learning to be more student centered which is huge for what we were doing in terms of pedagogy and the role of the library media specialist.

The TECH DEPT acknowledged the importance of administrator buy-in, “we’ve been blessed to have leadership who firmly believes that the library space in a schoolhouse can be the heart and soul of the school building. That position is critical for so many perspectives.”

Part of the new vision was to implement a 1:1 device program which means that every student would be given a computer device for learning. The TECH DEPT described the important role of the SL:

Providing devices to every student in this school district also brings with it ... a wealth of need around digital citizenship...and the library media specialist in our county is the one who, in the elementary school, predominantly provides our digital citizenship curriculum to students.

Since students had devices, another priority was to ensure easy access to digital resources. The TECH DEPT created a single sign-on for all digital resources in the district and worked together with the SLs to provide access to those resources: The TECH DEPT described:

I think part of that is connected to what we call our digital ecosystem and how you access those resources. And the library media specialist has, from day one, been essential in how that's been spread to schools, how that person has worked with our classroom teachers to help them understand what resources are available.

The TECH DEPT also described ways SLs are valued as leaders in district initiatives:

It's been critical to us....to be able to have a centralized communication channel where we can reach out to all our library media specialists, share with them what's happening at a systemic level, and also get their feedback on what it looks like in practical application in individual schoolhouses.

These quotes illustrate that administrators not only understand what SLs do, they also value the knowledge, skills, and resources SLs bring to the 1:1 environment.

Rebranding. The move to the 1:1 device program provided an opportunity to rebrand the library through consistent messaging and updated physical spaces. The TECH DEPT reported that consistent, unified messaging helped rebrand the school library and “shift[ed] the paradigm of how we view the librarian.” These efforts were led by the LIB PROG STAFF who realized “the biggest change is that we created a narrative.” They were consistent with the message that “the school library is the most powerful classroom in the school.” SLs also got the message out by regularly communicating what students are learning in the library:

They have Twitter accounts for the school libraries ... to publicize what students are doing... They do e-newsletter[s] using Smore and tools like that to get the word out. They have a section in the school newsletter that goes home to parents and we do a lot of work with the office communications to publicize special programs and things we're doing.

Building and redesigning new library spaces were opportunities to help rebrand school libraries. The TECH DEPT acknowledged “So all of these new spaces, we've also had a

tremendous opportunity to influence what that space looks like. And it's given us a chance to rebrand, through the physical space, what a library can be." The MS PRIN pointed out the effect of library redesign on people's perspective, "I've had...teachers comment on me about how the doors are always open and how this is a much more welcoming space." The HS PRIN reinforced this phenomenon by noting: "The teachers and students don't just see simply books in the library. They see it as an open space of discovery." The DIST ADMIN confirms:

So when I walk into some of our high school learning commons, there are teaching spaces, there are independent research spaces, there are collaboration spaces, they're truly designed to meet students' needs in a variety of ways which is just, I think, awesome.

These findings indicate that shedding the lingering stereotype of outdated library spaces and services is a multi-pronged approach that includes all stakeholders and funds appropriated for construction and renovation.

Continuous Learning. The district supported an environment of continuous learning where individual training, professional development, and mentorship was valued. The SL Group acknowledged:

We're very blessed, at least from my point of view, to have the leadership that we have because they encourage us to try new things, to take risks, and to say hey I want to do this in my library, and to have the support – talk to me about why you want to do it and we'll support you and help you and make this happen.

The TECH DEPT expressed how SLs must "continue to grow in their role." The LIB PROG STAFF described layers of support they have implemented: professional development during the summer and throughout the school year, on site visits with informal feedback, one on one conversations with individual SLs, mentorship programs, and "opportunities for our librarians to get together and talk about challenges or to see each other teach." The LIB PROG

STAFF was able to get funding for these supports, evidence that they have a seat at the table with district decision makers.

Curriculum

Embedded resources. SLs were leaders in curriculum development that embedded library resources across content areas. The LIB PROG STAFF described: “We have teams of library media specialists who work on the curriculum every summer.” In this funded position, they can embed library resources into the content area curriculum at the district level. The DIST CURR LDR stated:

They [SLs] are a part of team planning, they’re a part of understanding the curriculum...we have so many resources to pull together, and we work together, and they build us really great meaningful thing and we embed it in the curriculum.

The LIB PROG STAFF described how ebooks were funded and used:

The other thing that we’ve been able to do is to continue making strategic investments in ebook content and then working with content offices to have those ebooks be anchor texts in lessons and units and it helps push the library into content.

These examples illustrate how library resources can be effectively and easily embedded into district curriculum.

Integrated library instruction. Scaling up research instruction across content areas was a pathway to an integrated library program. The LIB PROG STAFF developed short grade level research modules called “Slam Dunks” that could be embedded in any content area curriculum. The research modules were also pathways for collaboration. The DIST ADMIN confirmed, “In some of our research modules that are designed for classroom teachers in content areas, you have to work with your school library media specialist, there’s no other way to do it.”

In addition, crosswalking the ELA and library curriculum increased the reach of library instruction. To create a crosswalk, a content analysis is conducted to identify alignment between different subject area standards. The DIST ADMIN explained:

That's (media literacy education) all over our curriculum which was really kind of cool for me to see... it's always been in our library curriculum...but now it's actually layered into our English Language Arts curriculum so there is a huge overlap in terms of information and media literacy in ELA as kids engage in the research process but also just in the reading process so that's huge.

These examples illustrate how effective it is to be able to have a library leadership team take the time and resources to integrate library instruction across content areas.

Virtual learning. Even before the sudden shift to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LIB PROG STAFF was developing online, self-paced learning modules. The HS Ts described:

We worked as a team to create those [research modules] and so the students understand how to do good, solid research...we looked at some college level research and what would be expected at that level, to set up the modules. And that research process, the modules, are opened to all students.

The LIB PROG STAFF also developed career exploration virtual modules. The HS T share, "they're basically ... Interactive PowerPoints that students can guide themselves through and ... available on the public site now, so similar to the research modules...they're out there for any of the stakeholders in BCPS to use them." These examples indicate that the LIB PROG STAFF was on the forefront of virtual learning to provide greater access to library instruction.

Discussion

This ideal case study explored the knowledge, skills, and dispositions valued for SLs at an exemplary school district that was shifting their vision to student centered pedagogy and integrating educational technology through a 1:1 device program. It also examined the contextual factors that impacted the success of the library program. The findings suggest that many of the

valued knowledge, skills, and dispositions were consistent with the research from the field. Exemplary SLs are master teachers, leaders, and instructional partners. They have strong technology skills and are experts in information and digital literacy. Administrators valued the dispositions of embracing change and building relationships with teachers and students. Respondents across the interviews agreed that advocating for the library and the creation of warm and welcoming spaces were essential in rebranding the library program.

The findings also yielded some new knowledge and skills for exemplary SLs that were important in the transition to a 1:1 device setting. Although it is known that SLs should be competent in integrating technology into instruction (Elbasri, 2018; Johnston, 2012), this study indicated that developing virtual and “outside the four walls” library services and re-imagining physical library space to meet changing use needs were priorities. Educator preparation programs may want to look more closely at Standard 4 of the ALA/AASL/ CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards (ALA, 2019), Organization and Access, which addresses flexible and open access to vetted library resources and services. The findings from this study may help them assess ways their curriculum could better prepare pre-service SLs to meet this standard.

The results of this study confirmed previous research on contextual factors that support school library program success. Administration buy-in and relationships with teachers are critical for an integrated library program (Oberg, 2009; Travis, 2008). The findings from this study also confirm the importance of a collaborative relationship with the TECH DEPT (Johnston, 2012). One reason it worked so well in this district is that the TECH DEPT oversaw expanded responsibilities that included the implementation of innovative, student-centered learning initiatives in a 1:1 setting. Rather than competing with or misunderstanding what SLs do, SLs were seen as essential partners because of their expertise in curating digital resources and

teaching 21st century skills. This finding suggests the importance of preparing pre-service SLs with strategies to parlay the library program into district technology initiatives.

Although the results from this study confirm that integrating library instruction across the curriculum is a prominent enabling factor for a strong school library program (Klinger, Lee, & Stephenson, 2009; Marcoux & Loertscher, 2014; Oberg, 2009), the findings add to the knowledge base on how integrated library instruction can be accomplished. The LIB PROG STAFF prioritized curating and embedding digital library resources such as ebooks and databases into subject area curriculum that often required collaborative lessons with the school librarian.

This study also adds to the knowledge base about the importance of a virtual library and how SLs can build one. The findings acknowledge that the LIB PROG STAFF, with the support of the TECH DEPT and ADMIN, were able to create online research modules for different grade levels that were openly accessible. They ensured access to virtual library resources through the single sign-on system, consolidated their digital resources into a centralized space to provide equitable access across the district, and pushed library services outside of the walls to the students. These findings are features of a robust virtual library and could inform the profession as they reflect on best practices learned from the forced virtual learning that happened during the pandemic.

The important role played by the LIB PROG STAFF was a common thread across the interviews. When synthesizing the findings, I realized that in this case, a centralized library team was pivotal to the success of the school library program. They developed systematic processes and procedures to support practicing SLs in their continuous learning. They had the time and means to advocate, create consistent messaging, and prioritize rebranding the school library

program. They supported teachers in integrating technology and research instruction in in the curriculum. There is a dearth in the literature about the impact of school library district coordinator or district library team on the success of a library program, so the findings add to the knowledge base in this area. Future research on the impact of district library coordinators and or district library teams is recommended.,

The findings suggest that district level staff dedicated to supporting SLs is effective but what if school districts are too small or do not fund district leadership positions? How can this district level work be accomplished? Asking for time to plan as a group, systematically joining curriculum committees, aligning goals to the district strategic plan, building relationships with key leaders are some possibilities. The findings could inform educator preparation programs, professional developers, and state associations on ways SLs could build stronger library programs within these constraints. Future research on school library district leaders as enabling factors in school library program success is recommended.

A limitation of the study was that participants tended to exhibit social desirability bias, meaning, they wanted to say positive things about their program because they thought that is what I wanted to hear. To reduce that effect, I asked them if “ho-hum” librarians who were “not doing what was needed to further the school library program” (Jones & Long, 2019, p. 18) still existed in their award-winning library program. The answer was yes, there were. They acknowledged how frustrating that was but did not give up on them. The LIB PROG STAFF described a multi-layered professional development approach that met SLs at the level they were at to help them grow and improve.

Likewise, the two principals interviewed only had positive things to say about their SLs. When asked if there were principals in the district that did not perceive the value of a SL, the

answer was in the affirmative. The TECH DEPT suggested that “a principal who does not value a SL probably has a SL who is not stepping up or if they are, are not promoting themselves enough.” The takeaway is that continuous learning and advocacy never stop in this profession and preservice SLs should be prepared for this reality.

Conclusion

This single case study collected rich data from a range of perspectives: SLs, technology staff, administrators, and teachers. The multi perspective approach made this study unique compared to other studies that have focused on one viewpoint such as principals (Church, 2008; 2010), graduate students (DeGroot & Branch, 2011; Long & Jones, 2016) or SLs themselves (Marcoux & Loertcher, 2014). This study also added to the research base about what is working in a school library district that was transitioning to a 1:1 device program and prioritizing student-centered pedagogy. SLs who partner with the TECH DEPT to provide easy and equitable access to all library resources for every member of the school community, participate in the rebranding of physical spaces to facilitate student interaction, develop virtual learning modules to scale up library instruction, and embed digital library resources into other subject area curriculum were notable findings. Although this district was large, the nature of the problems is likely similar for other districts transitioning to a 1:1 device program, so the findings may have some transferability to districts of any size.

School librarianship is often branded as an “evolving” profession. This study is significant because frequent studies of what is current knowledge, skills and dispositions that are valued and the contextual factors enabling library program success will ensure our understanding of how the profession is morphing (or not) to meet the changing needs of students and school communities. Based on the findings, future research is recommended on assessing new learning

activities in educator preparation programs that could help preservice SLs develop competencies such as virtual space and redesigned physical library spaces and an integrated library program curricular approach. Exploring district level school library leadership strategies in an increasingly digital learning environment is also recommended.

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Appendix A. Semi-structured Interview Questions by Group

Technology Department

1. Can each of you introduce yourselves by telling me your title, how long you have worked in this job, and how you got to this point in your career.
2. Tell me about the Department of Innovative Learning / Library Media Program
 - a. Key initiatives supported
 - i. Quality and diverse Resource collections
 - ii. Technology to manage school resources
 - iii. 24 hr access to resources
 - iv. Expand educational outreach to students and families is safe and ethical use of information technologies
3. How has BCPS rebranded the role of the school librarian?
4. How have libraries/librarians helped fulfill Blueprint 2.0?
5. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do school librarians who exemplify excellence have?
6. What kinds of activities are students engaged in at the library?
 - a. What do school librarians teach? – curriculum?
 - b. How do school librarians support literacy?
 - c. STEAM/Maker activities
 - d. Educational Technology
7. How has the physical space of the library changed?

8. Describe how librarians collaborate/partner with teachers, organizations, and other stakeholders.
9. What documents can you direct me to or share with me (curriculum, Instructional Digital conversion, Lesson Planning Resources, schedule of librarians, and training, other documents that show role in Blueprint 2.0.
10. In what ways has the school librarian been a leader and advocate in the school?
11. What do you value most about the school library space, program and librarian?
12. How has the district supported school library programs and school librarians?
13. How have you responded if any librarians were resistant to change?
14. Why do you think BCPS won the AASL School Library of the Year award in 2017?

Administrators

1. Please tell me about yourself. What is your background? How long have you been in this position?
2. Why do you think BCPS won the AASL School Library of the Year award in 2017?
3. How has the school library media program been instrumental in reaching goals of Blueprint 2.0? Were school libraries/librarians considered key players in the development of it If so, how? Focus on:
 - a. Facility upgrades
 - b. Access to 21st skills and world class curriculum
 - c. Innovative approaches to teaching and learning – Instructional Digital Conversion – OER? Process to acquire and integrate new tech practices? Training of others?
 - d. Student performance data
 - e. Student safety i.e. antibully
4. How has BCPS rebranded the role of the school librarian?

5. What do you think are important knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective school librarians to have?
6. How do school library media specialists **impact student learning**?
 - a. Literacy, media literacy, STEAM, information literacy, educational technology, digital citizenship
7. How has the district supported school library programs and school librarians? PD?
 - a. Describe the **library resources** that you think are important.
8. How has the physical space of the library changed?
9. What do you **value most** about the school library program and librarian? What would you tell a colleague who was thinking of eliminating school library media positions?

(Why do you think BCPS was awarded the AASL NSLMPY Award?)
10. What advice would you give to a school library media educator preparation program to best prepare students to be effective school library media specialists?

Teachers

1. What do you see is valuable, innovative about the school library program?
2. How has BCPS rebranded the role of the school librarian?
3. What do you think are important knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective school librarians to have?
4. How do school library media specialists **impact student learning**?
 - a. Literacy, media literacy, STEAM, information literacy, educational technology, digital citizenship
5. How do SLMS support you?
6. How do SLMS support your students?

7. What kinds of collaborative projects have you done with SLMS?
8. Do you perceive SLMS as teachers, leaders, instructional partners, information specialists, or program administrators?
9. Why do you think BCPS won the AASL School Library of the Year award in 2017?

School Librarian Group

1. How has BCPS rebranded the role of the school librarian?
2. What do you think are important knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective school librarians to have?
3. Continuous learning – It's apparent that you are always learning. What does this look like for you? How do you stay relevant and experienced with technology tools for teaching?
4. I've read that you are teachers first. What does this mean to you? How is this realized in your practice?
 - a. Creating a learner centered environment
 - b. Equitable access to technology
 - c. Rethinking use of space, furnishings, and resources,
 - d. Input from students and staff
 - e. Inquiry learning
5. What are the lesson planning resources that align library instruction with AASL standards for the 21st C learner?
6. **Dispositions** of SLMS at BCPS – how do you motivate SLMS, how about those who resist?
 - a. Willingness to adopt new practices
 - b. Re-imagine physical space
 - c. Re-define program

7. What kind of leaders are you? Advocates?
8. Why do you think you are valued here at BCPS?
9. What advice would you give me to better prepare students to be SLMS?

Public Librarians

1. Introduce yourselves by telling what your job, your background, and how long you have been collaborating with BCPS. What is your relationship with the BCPS and the library program?
2. What is the SAIL team and how have you partnered with the BCPS and their school library media specialists. How did it come about? What are the goals? How have you accomplished them? How have you measured the impact?
3. Why do you think BCPS won the AASL School Library of the Year award in 2017?
4. How has BCPS rebranded the role of the school librarian?
5. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do school librarians who exemplify excellence have?
6. How do you as a team support literacies?
7. How have school librarians been leaders? Advocates?
8. How do you as a team provide quality and diverse resource collections?
9. What kinds of activities are students engaged in at the library? Literacy, media literacy, STEAM, information literacy, educational technology, digital citizenship
10. What advice would you give library schools preparing school librarians and public librarians about collaboration?