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**Demographic Study, Part 2: School Library Investigation**

Now that you have a good foundation about the school your library is a part of, it’s time to examine the library itself.

**What are some of the things you’re going to want to know?**

1. **Is there a mission or vision statement for the library? Goals?**

No, there hasn’t been an updated one in many years.

1. **How many people work in the library (librarian, paraprofessionals, volunteers, student worker?**

There’s a full time media specialist and a part time paraprofessional who works from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Every once in a while, the librarian seeks help from parent volunteers.

There are also 4 blocks of help desk students, or students who were recommended by teachers to help out in the media center for one class period. There are a total of 8 help desk students who alternate working in the library throughout the week.

1. **What type of schedule exists for the library (fixed or flexible, hours of availability, open before and after school?) How does the librarian maintain a schedule of what’s going on?**

Students can come anytime during the day to the library as long as they have pass from the teacher. They also need a pass to be able to come in during lunch periods, which they then turn into the media specialist who writes their name and lunch period down on a list. The library opens at 6:45 a.m., 25 minutes before the first bell rings at 7:10 a.m. Students are allowed to socialize during this time, print things for class, and/or circulate materials. The library stays open until 3 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday – 45 minutes after the last bell of the day, so students can also come in then to work on something or check out books.

She keeps a printed schedule on a clip board of all the classes she’s teaching during each block for each week. This list also indicates if other teachers are using part of the media center for something else.

1. **When can students check out materials and what is the circulation policy? Overdue policy?**

Students can check out materials before or after the first and last bell of the day, during their lunch period, or when they come to the library with a class or with a pass from a teacher. Students are allowed to check out up to two books at a time. They have two weeks to keep them out; however, no overdue fees are charged. The librarian makes exceptions for the number of books she allows checked out at once if she realizes certain kids aren’t going to abuse their privileges.

1. **Is there a professional collection?**

Yes, there is a collection of dvds and books for teachers to check out and use in their classrooms. There is a very small book collection because it’s seldom ever used. There are a lot of books about the Big 6 research methodology for good note taking.

1. **What resources are available for teachers to use in their classrooms (cameras, projectors, manipulatives, etc.)**

Digital cameras, video cameras, tripods, Google Chrome books and laptops, document cameras (like overhead projectors), headphones, speakers, webcameras, and iphones (not very workable)

1. **Can students come to the library individually? If so, what is the procedure?**

During class time, yes, but only if they have a note from their teacher and only if they’re coming to check out books or use the computers.

1. **What is the budget like and what other means of funding are there? Book fairs? Grants?**

For 2014-2015, the budget was $5,404. This number was slightly less in the years prior because it’s based on a per student ratio. There are no book fairs in high schools. Small grants are available potentially through the school’s PTA or retirement community although she’s never actively pursued getting these. The media specialist has to seek out her own grants through school library funders and other means. Because Hough is in such an affluent neighborhood with generally high test scores and school achievement rankings, the media specialist feels there is very little need and very little chance of Hough securing grants. They also received a Belk Bowl grant for $25,000 for Google Chrome books.

1. **What other materials are available for students besides books? Are there ebooks? iPods?**

There are Chrome laptops available for check-out. There are also some playaways for checkout, which are shelved with the regular books. There are no ebooks or ipods.

1. **How many computers are in the library?**

26 in total; 24 are desktops for a class to use. Then there’s one library catalog computer and one computer for the teacher to control what is shown on the overhead projector screen.

1. **Is the library furniture on wheels for flexible arrangement? Is the shelving appropriate for the age of the students and for being able to monitor students in the library?**

None of the furniture is on wheels. There are different types of tables and chairs scattered around the library, including bar stools and high top tables near the windows for playing games, a few upholstered sofas, restaurant style benches, and bean bag chairs. There’s also a cluster of desktop computers in the center of the library facing the projector screen with one low lying table behind the computers for students to bring their own laptops to plug into the built-in outlets. Yes, the shelving arrangement is appropriate. All of the lower lying shelves are placed in the center of the media center and shelve all of the fiction books as well as the 900s and biographies. The higher shelves are placed around the perimeter of the room and are primarily for the nonfiction (0-800’s), the short story collection, and the magazine/newspaper rack.

1. **What makes the library attractive, appealing, and welcoming to students?**

The library building is very open and well lit with large vista windows running down the entire length of one side of the library that look out over the staff parking lot. All of the taller shelves and furniture is around the perimeter of the room, making the room look more open with very little to obstruct anyone’s line of sight. There are bean bag chairs and comfy sofas placed around the room, especially near the large windows, making students feel welcome to sit down and hang out for a while, read, or study.

There is a large white board sign right when you walk into the library that says “no food or drink in the library,” which is a new policy this year and could be seen as a deterrent to students, but it’s really not that bad.

1. **How is classroom management handled in the library? (how do students come in, how are they dismissed, hall procedures, misbehaviors, etc.**

The librarian has to stand out in the hall when the bells ring during all class changes to make sure that students are going to their next class or wherever they need to be going. Students come in before or after school or during lunch to circulate materials and must have a note to come in otherwise. There is a new policy that students are not allowed to eat in the library. Those students who the media specialist catches violating this policy are told to put the food away, and upon the second offense, are written up.

1. **How does the librarian plan with teachers? Does he or she go to grade level meetings?**

She attends a professional learning community (PLC) meeting with the English 11 teachers because she feels she works most directly with those teachers to help those students write their required 11th grade research paper. She’s talked with EC and CTE teachers and offers orientations and other classes for their students. On the whole, she feels like she has to make a more concerted effort to seek out collaborative partnerships with teachers at Hough than she has at other schools primarily because the teachers are so focused on testing that they feel like they can’t afford to take the time to send their class to the media center. At other schools, teachers had sometimes sought her out to collaborate.

1. **How is the librarian evaluated? Is there an instrument that is used and who does the evaluation? How does the evaluation process work?**

The librarian is supposed to be evaluated 3 times a year through observations by county school administrators (not media specialist administrators) with a final evaluation at the end of the year by the school principal. However, according to the media specialist I’m shadowing, often times, someone does not show up to evaluate them all three times and, if they do, they don’t necessarily pick times when the media specialist has students to instruct. In a traditional classroom for teachers, the evaluations are supposed to be 40 minute observation periods in a classroom followed by a post evaluation conference with the evaluator and teacher; however, for school librarians, the evaluator comes in sporadically to evaluate and may or may not schedule a formal post-evaluation conference.

There is a rubric for evaluating NC school library media coordinators that was developed 5 years ago. Based on the evaluator’s observations, the standards are evaluated based on a series of criteria and indicators that rank the librarian into one of the following competency levels for that particular standard: developing, proficient, accomplished, distinguished, and not demonstrated. The goal is for all librarians to score with all proficient and at least two accomplished standards by the end of their third year of teaching. However, my media specialist says that in the Charlotte Mecklenburg school system, at the beginning of the year, all teachers start over at the developing level and must re-earn their accomplished or distinguished classification by the end of the year instead of letting their ranking from the previous year carry into the next school year.

The five standards for evaluation include: school library media coordinators demonstrate leadership; school library coordinators build a learning environment that meets the instructional needs of a diverse population of students; school library media coordinators implement a comprehensive 21st century library media program; school library media coordinators demonstrate knowledge of learners and learning and promote effective instructional practices; and school media coordinators reflect on their practice.

Last year, the media specialist I’m shadowing led a team of media specialists across Mecklenburg County to devise specific indicators that more clearly explained how a librarian could earn each of the different levels of proficiency for each standard. Teacher evaluations already had clear indicators established by the state heads of curriculum and instruction in Raleigh, but media specialists did not. These indicators have just been approved for use in Mecklenburg County for media specialists and may potentially be used by other counties in the state in the future.

Librarians must successfully make at least proficient on all of the standards by the end of the year in order to pass their evaluation. If not, they are put on an action plan where they must demonstrate specific ways that they are going to meet specific standards. They have one year to rectify and show improvement; otherwise, if they are still within their first three years of teaching, they are let go, and if they have had more than three years of teaching, they are put on probationary status.

1. **Is there a central system for administering DVDs?**

There is a county wide media and technology committee that asks media specialists to solicit input from their school’s teachers regarding which movies they would like for the schools to purchase to show in the classrooms; however, there is no formal approval process or committee for approving what dvds can or cannot be shown in classes.

1. **What are the different types of technology available through the library? (laptops, tablets, mobile labs, cameras)**

Laptops, desktops, video and still cameras, projector and screen for classes, Google Chrome books, etc.

1. **What is the librarian’s role with technology for the school? How is technology supported?**

There’s a technology facilitator who shares an office with the head librarian, but does not actively collaborate with her. It’s the technology facilitator’s job to make sure all the technology is up and running for the school. She puts in work orders and responds to tickets when the technology is not functioning properly. The librarian is solely in charge of issuing technology to the teachers at the beginning of the school year and over the course of the school year on an as needed basis. She issues Chrome laptop carts and keys to the carts, she issues the teachers remotes for their projectors and printers, and she issues cameras for teachers who need them.

1. **Is there a library advisory committee? If so, how often do they meet and what is covered in the meetings? Has there ever been a challenge? How are challenges handled?**

There is a Media and Technology committee at each school that meets a couple times a year; the media specialist I’m observing is on this committee along with the department heads and the principal. They discuss issues such as collection development, technology ordering issues, and media services policy changes that affect media specialists on the school level. She does not recall ever having a challenge on the high school level. In elementary schools, sometimes the committee would have to address a parent’s decision to challenge the media specialist’s choice in ordering a banned book to add to the collection.

1. **What committees does the librarian serve on?**

She is head of the Media and Technology committee, secretary for the School Leadership Team (SLC), attends all department head committee meetings, attends the 11th grade English PLC, and is a member of SCLMA. She also was approached by the head of Virtual Learning and Media Services county department to head up the team to develop indicators for the school media specialist evaluation tool.

1. **Do the librarians get together in the district? Is there a district supervisor? If not, why not? If so, how does the district supervisor help school librarians?**

There’s a Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Virtual Learning and Media Services department based downtown and Janet Jones is the district media specialist for this department. The media specialist at Hough High School does not have time to attend the district wide media specialist meetings because she has to schedule her own subs, which is very challenging. This group meets a couple times a year. Janet oversees the purchasing department and online circulation system department based downtown. She sends out communication email blasts to all media specialists regarding any changes, updates, or important announcements that impact media specialists directly. She heads the district committee meetings, but encourages the media specialists to supply the content for the meeting and she just facilitates them.

1. **What is the purchasing process like?**

She receives a budget in the fall for 2,800 kids of $5,800. She is given one month to create an order and send it in by the end of October. They’re supposed to get the order, ideally, in December. The order includes books and dvds, but not supplies.

1. **How does the librarian handle selection of materials? Selection policy? Deselection policy?**

She purchases ALA star reviewed books, VOYA reviewed books, and other books recommended from notable review sites. She fills in the gaps in the series she’s already got started. She purchases based on specific teacher and student requests she gathers throughout the year, particularly fiction, graphic novels, and books related to popular classes, such as forensic science and the social sciences (300s). Other areas, such as the 900s or 800s dealing with history and literacy criticism she rarely purchases as she knows there’s little interest among teacher or students. She purchases primarily from Follett.

She used to compare her collection to the suggested purchasing collection in the Wilson catalog, but since decided that she needed to be more concerned with what the teachers and students at her school are wanting to check out rather than what a standardized catalog is recommending be in her collection.

1. **How are the materials processed & catalogued? Weeding policy?**

The books come already processed and catalogued directly from the vendor. There’s a problem with converting the catalog record from the former Horizon system to Destiny.

She doesn’t having a weeding policy or set time to weed. She tends to weed only when she’s shelving or doing inventory or when a student calls something to her attention. Books that have water damage, are stained, have excessive ripped pages, etc. are all primary candidates for weeding.

She does weed irregularly on an as needed basis to remove books that aren’t circulating or that she knows are no longer popular with students. Sometimes she’ll run circulation reports to remove books that haven’t circulated in several years. She also weeds sections of the nonfiction collection to eliminate books that may contain outdated or misinformation. For instance, she recently heavily weeded the evolution section; she’s also weeded the social sciences and other areas that get more heavy use to make sure they’re staying up to date and continue to circulate well.

1. **Does the librarian have a supply budget? What is purchased with this budget?**

Not a specific library supply budget. She gets materials from the supply closet downstairs kept by the financial secretary for all teachers and staff to use. She can also request the financial advisor to purchase specific items for her collection, such as a label maker.

1. **AUP and Internet access/use?**

Charlotte Mecklenburg schools does have an AUP internet policy, which was first adopted in March 1996 and has since been updated three times, most recently in August 2012. The document basically states that students have access to internal CMS informational resources and the internet for the purposes of supporting education, research, and career development. There’s also a section that addresses that students can bring their own personal technological device (PTD) to school as long as the device can access the internet and supports student learning. CMS staff and administrators have the ability to monitor, censor, and restrict content that students post and access through the internet as well as through CMS resources. Students must sign an acceptable use policy at the beginning of the year.

1. **Procedures for attending professional conferences, meetings, taking a day off from school – is a substitute provided?**

The media specialist has to provide her own substitute; she’s said that sometimes she will line up a substitute and then another teacher who needs a sub will steal the sub from the library that day! She must notify the principal a couple days in advance to have this approved.

1. **Are there ever activities held in the library after school, in the evenings, or on weekends?**

Yes, National Honor Society, Project Unify, PTSA/Board of Directors, swim team, student leadership team, and speech-language pathologist area meetings are all frequently scheduled meetings held in the evenings after school in the media center. The media specialist used to be the advisor for a writing club until interest waned. She led a talk about prom dos and don’ts during lunch one year, which received little turnout.

1. **Author visits, special programs, storytelling events, etc.?**

Curriculum night, town hall meeting (district superintendent meets with parents), senior project presentations and assessments, picture day makeups and club pictures for yearbook are all special events hosted in the library after school and during school. She hosted a special session led by the school ESL teacher about how to get published. Author visits are too expensive.

1. **Is there a district handbook? Teacher handbook for new employees?**

yes

1. **What activities does the librarian do that fill the five roles of a school librarian: leader, program administrator, teacher, instructional partner, and information specialist?**

**Leader:** head of the Media and Technology committee, secretary for the School Leadership Team (SLC)

**Program administrator:** identifying the need for, learning, training and teaching Easybib and turnitin.com to students and teachers; leading a literacy Read poster initiative where she photographed teachers holding copies of their favorite books and posting these posters throughout the school; overseeing the lamination and printing of teachers’ posters and papers; implementing a lunch time policy for students to keep track of what students come into the library during lunch

**Teacher**: teaches four help desk classes to a total of 8 students; teaches classes collaboratively per teacher’s request

**Instructional partner:** partners with various teachers, particularly EC and CTE teachers, to lead instructional classes, including library orientations, overview of nonfiction, how to use electronic databases, how to use Easybib and turnitin.com and other research tools, how to critically evaluate web and print resources using the Big 6 approach, etc.

**Information specialist**: she is in charge of maintaining the collection (purchasing, weeding, and inventory), she oversees the circulation of the entire collection (checking in and out, renewals), she helps kids one-on-one and through classes with readers’ advisory and research questions

1. **What advice would the librarian give you that has served him/her well as a school librarian?**

She offered the following advice: “Try very hard to establish a good working relationship with your principal. Understand that you never will get everything on your To Do list done.  Just as you finish three things another five will come along.”

Reflection:

Overall, I would say the librarian is very well organized and committed to her job. She seems to have sufficient help, both students, volunteers, and staff, to run a media center for a student body of 2,615 students. It’s shocking how small her yearly collection budget is, but it’s also understanding why she would think that a media center located in such an affluent area with such high student achievement scores would be less likely to receive additional funding in the form of grants as there is not a demonstrated need for extra help.

One area the librarian could work on is taking on more leadership roles both within the school and outside the school in the form of community partnerships that would benefit the library. I also think there’s lots of potential for the library space to be utilized on a more regular basis, both after school hours as well as during the summer and over the weekends. This would just require the media specialist securing a more dedicated group of parent volunteers to help run afterschool tutoring programs as well as host clubs and other events within the library.

I was also saddened by how little time the media specialist has to interact with other school media specialists throughout the district. The thought of having to secure your own sub who may or may not get stolen from you by another teacher is just depressing. The disregard school district administrators seem to give media specialists when it comes to formal evaluations is appalling. Just because media specialists aren’t full time teachers doesn’t mean their job should be less strictly evaluated than traditional classroom teachers.

In terms of access, atmosphere, and resources for students, I think this school’s media center is well equipped to meet the needs of their students. The library design is open and inviting, the technology available to students is ample, and students are freely able to come and go in the library as they please as long as they have a teacher’s pass. I have been a bit disappointed by how few students seem to circulate through the library throughout the day; a lot of this might be attributed to unbelievably short lunch periods (only 20 minutes) and other tight scheduling issues beyond the librarian’s control.

Finally, I really think the media specialist could devote more time to actively approaching teachers about how potential “media specialist – teacher – student” class collaborations could be arranged. Overall, I think the media specialist’s doing the best she can with what’s she’s got. Limited time and slashed budgets make it difficult for the media center to be as robust as it could be or once was.