Group 9:  Kelly Cecil (Summary)

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*School Libraries Work!* Group Summary

**Discussion**

Group 9’s discussion took place on the discussion boards on Canvas between September 6th and September 18th.  Group members individually responded to the assigned reading and viewing and added feedback to other members’ responses.  Following individual responses, each group member responded on the Group Response Canvas board with their key findings and plan of action ideas.  The group easily came to a consensus on the three key findings that would have the greatest impact on a building-level school library program.  A wide range of professional and personal experiences added to the discussions.

**Key Findings**

**Full-Time Certified Librarian/Adequate Staff**

The data and reports overwhelmingly showed the importance of having a full-time certified librarian and how student achievement is impacted by the presence or lack of one.  According to the *School Libraries Work!* report, "Between 2005 and 2009, states that gained school librarian positions experienced larger increases and no decreases in reading scores, while states that lost librarians experienced smaller increases or decreases in reading scores” (*School Libraries Work!*, 2016, 9).  The group found this interesting and especially impressive considering factors, such as socio-economic status, were accounted for.  Not only did the research continually show the positive impact of having a certified librarian on student achievement, it also showed the importance of having that librarian be full-time.  According to the Biagini reading, “For the sake of student learning, it is important for school districts to employ a Library Science K-12-certified school librarian for each school. In schools where the librarian is available only part-time during the school day or on only certain days of the school week, the librarians aren’t able to spend enough time in each school to know the teachers or the students or what teaching and learning is happening in the classrooms” (Biagini, 2012, pg.5).

        Our group felt that it was also essential that libraries be adequately staffed.  Many school librarians find themselves stretched thin and unable to perform all the tasks associated with and assigned to them.  Having adequate support staff allows the school librarian the opportunity to collaborate with teachers and students which is shown to positively impact student achievement. The Biagini reading discussed the importance of adequate staffing, specifically in the form of a library aid, and how that affects the librarian’s ability to collaborate and provide instruction. “A librarian who has the assistance of an aide can concentrate on the daily collaborative planning, teaching and assessment activities with teachers and students that lead to student academic success” (2012, p. 6).  *The School Libraries Work!* report provides a guideline for what the minimum adequate staffing might be, “The success of any school library program in promoting high academic achievement depends fundamentally on the presence of adequate staffing—specifically, each library should have at least one full-time certified LMS with at least one full-time aide or support staff member. For all three tested grades, the relationship between such staffing and Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) reading scores was both positive and statistically significant” (*School Libraries Work!*, 2016, p. 23).

        One group member expressed a sentiment we all agreed with when she said that if our key findings were ranked that a certified librarian should be first because an amazing certified librarian would be able to make any schedule and funding work.  A final finding from the *School Libraries Work!* report illustrates the importance of full-time certified librarians and adequate staff and backs up the group’s assessment, “Certified LMSs and aides emerged as the most critical component of the library media program at all school levels. Well-staffed programs, especially those with full-time professional and support staff, exerted a greater impact on student academic performance” (School Libraries Work! 2016, p. 26).

**Flexible Schedule**

Flexible Scheduling emerged as another key finding that impacts building-level school library program.  Flexible schedules allow students access to the library and allow librarians the opportunity to collaborate with students and teachers on research and instruction, both factors research shows to positively impact student achievement and test scores.  The positive impact can be even more dramatic for minority students according to the PA School Library Project, "Six times as many students who are Black and have flexible access to their school library during the school day scored “Advanced” on PSSA Writing Tests as those students without such access. Seven times as many students who are Hispanic and who have flexible access to their school library during the school day scored “Advanced” on PSSA Writing Tests" (PA School Library Project, 2012, p. 8).

        Our group did discuss some of the issues that make flexible scheduling difficult for some schools.  Issues included school population, lack of adequate staff, and teacher planning period requirements.  These seemed to be issues that especially impact elementary schools.

**Funding**

Funding was the final key finding that our group felt has a huge impact on building-level school library programs.  Adequate funding allows a school to provide the resources needed for student success.  According to the *School Libraries Work!* report, “Students in schools that spent more money—twice as much or more—on their school libraries were associated with higher student scores on the PSSA Reading Test” (*School Libraries Work!*, 2016, 2008).  Funding for school library programs must be adequate because it is essential to so many facets of a successful program.  The following quote from the PA School Library Project illustrates the various aspects of a school library program where funding may be allocated and why consistent and adequate funding is needed; "School libraries represent sizeable investments made by school districts over multiple years—the facility itself, staff, resources and equipment, technology support and networking fees. An adequate annual budget is necessary to purchase new resources during each school year and to lease equipment, licensed databases and other electronic resources. Consistent annual funding assures that the collection and the information technology infrastructure will remain current and useful" (PA School Library Project, 2012, pg. 9).

**Plan of Action**

1.   Advocate your worth and the worth of the school library program to administrators and the larger school community

·         Arm yourself with data that shows the impact of quality school library programs, adequate full-time certified librarians and support staff, flexible scheduling, and funding, such as the information provided in the reports for this assignment, and present this information to your administrators.  Administrators usually appreciate and will be more receptive to ideas with data that backs it up.

·         Seek out collaboration opportunities with teachers and students.

·         Invite your administrator to the library to see you in action, collaborating with students and teachers, and providing instruction.

·         Attend Professional Learning Community meetings, grade level curriculum meetings, and staff meetings.  Take on active leadership roles in your school.

·         Provide Professional Development to staff.

2.   Advocate for flexible scheduling

·         Arm yourself with data that shows the impact of flexible scheduling.

·         If a flexible schedule does not work with the overall schedule of the school, research schedules that may be a compromise, such a fixed-flex schedule.

·         Consider having hours outside of the traditional school day, before or after school.

3.   Funding

·         Arm yourself with data that shows the impact of adequate funding.

·         Be prepared to have reports/budget that show where funding should be allocated.  Complete a Collection Analysis if you do not have a current one.

·         Search out and apply for grants, as well as pursue partnerships with community organizations, philanthropies, and businesses.  Show your appreciation and thanks to those partnerships.

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