ASSIGNMENT 2

Saliha Patel - 300443113

LIBE 461 63C: Administration of the School Library Resource Centre

Instructor: Heather Daly

February 7, 2021

Congratulations on your new teacher-librarian position! It is wonderful to hear that you will have a full flexible schedule. The are several advantages of having a flexible schedule, such as: students having access to resources at the time of need or interest; library visits and the teaching of literacy skills can be related directly to classroom activities and assignments; the Teacher-Librarian has more time to collaborate with classroom teachers; and students can become more independent users of resources and gain information literacy skills (Mardis, 2016, pp. 37-38). I know that since you were a Teacher-Librarian at a different school before this position, you likely already have a clear philosophy and mission, as well as an idea of the many roles you will play at your school. As you step into your new adventure as teacher-librarian of this school, I have some advice to help you encourage people to use the student library learning commons (SLLC) and establish your relationships at the school.

Importance of Policy *Guiding question: Why should you develop policy?*

You mentioned that there is no current written policy. This is a great opportunity for you to develop your policy 'from scratch' based on your philosophy and mission for the library. This will be the foundation on which you build your school library learning commons and services. It is a document that will likely evolve as you and the school's needs evolve.

I know that you may be thinking that you have a million other things to do and won't have time for something like policy, but I can assure you that developing your policy now will make you a stronger and more confident teacher-librarian in the long term. According to MacDonell (2004), there are several advantages of developing a clearly written and well promoted policy, such as:
- Providing clear justifications for your practices when questioned by administrators or parents
- Helping students with library services
- Guiding teachers when they come to you for advice
- Setting goals in a thoughtful manner
- Setting clear guidelines for parents, and
- Preventing potential issues and misunderstandings before they arise

Craft Your Policy *Guiding question: How can you develop policy that is right for your school?*

In my opinion, there is no ultimate perfect library policy. The school library learning commons policies will be dependent on your school's unique needs, as well as the availability of resources and specific mandates from your school district. In her article, MacDonell (2004) outlines seven categories of library policy documents.

Category	Examples of "Essential" Documents	
1. Library Programming: The basic documents that will justify your daily practices as a Teacher-Librarian.	• Mission Statement • Cooperative Planning Policy • Internet Acceptable Use Policy	• Statement on Plagiarism • Library Skills Continuum
2. Collection Development: How you allocate funds, and your practices to improve the library collection	• Collection Development Policy • Book Challenge Policy & Procedure	• Donations Policy & Procedure • Weeding Policy & Procedure • Budget Formula Guidelines
3. Rules and Regulations: Clear statements of the responsibilities of those who use the library.	• Library Borrowing Rules • Library Fines	• Hours of Operation • Guidelines for Student Behavior
4. Procedures: Clear instructions for non-routine tasks.	• Inventory • Acquisitions	• Book Processing
5. Planning: Setting goals and assessing your progress.	• Strategic Plan	• Operational Plan
6. Reporting and Publicity: Promoting the library services for clientele and library contributions to the school.	• Annual Reports • Brochures for Parents	• Flyers for New Teachers • "Quick Picture" Statistics
7. Teaching Documents: Documents for teachers and students to use for daily informational skills.	• Research Process Handout • Online Searching How-To	• Bibliography and Text Citation How-To

At this point you do not need to develop all the documents for each category. Instead, I encourage you to start with the basics, like defining your mission statement and documents that shape the students' immediate engagement in the library, and then build from there depending on your school's learning needs. I also recommend that you read several examples of policies to help you determine what is right for your school. A great website that I came across is *"Resources for School Libraries"* (2021), which provides countless examples of school library policies, plus tips on getting started and staying organized.

Furthermore, the book "*Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Program in Canada"* from the Canadian Association for School Libraries and the Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (2003), provides practical frameworks and standards for developing and managing school library policy. It includes specific standards for staffing (in elementary and secondary schools), collections (size, types of resources, accessibility, funding, and facilities), and information and communication (technology).

As you develop your policy, you should consider also including other members of the school community in your planning. This will ensure that you address the needs and expectations of all learners, team members, and stakeholders of the school community.

Work with a Planning Team *Guiding question: How can the school community help with developing policy?*

The people in your school community can provide valuable input to your policy development and planning. The teachers and other staff at the school are more familiar with the school's mission statement, school culture, and the students' unique learning needs and will therefore bring context and depth to your policy.

Your planning team should be made up of a diverse group of stakeholders, including teachers, support staff, librarians, students, administrators, parents, the building technician and whomever else you think may bring a new perspective into the discussions. Each member represents a larger group of stakeholders and can communicate information with their colleagues. When you create your planning team, be sure to define the responsibilities such as helping to advise on the mission and beliefs of the library program, long and short term goals, the budgeting needs of the library, and policy making. A planning team will not make your professional decisions for you, but it "should have the power to shape the direction for the library program" (Johnson, 2012). Two-way communication is important when working with a planning team, so be sure to show them the first draft of your policy and then make adjustments as you acquire more advice. Johnson (2012) also crafts the term "ugly baby" comments to illustrate how a planning committee can bring a reality check for our policies and ideas, and provide valuable criticism and objective opinions with the students' best interest. Most importantly, the planning team will help you create policies that are welcoming and can bring more people into the library. The learning environment that you promote in the library is a reflection of your mission and beliefs, and therefore a reflection of your policies.

Create a Welcoming Environment *Guiding question: How can you cultivate a safe/welcoming environment for all clientele?*

Your policies will help you to cultivate the warm the welcoming environment you are trying to achieve for your library. Your library has the potential to be the "hub" of student engagement and learning, and I recommend that you carefully consider two key points when welcoming users and as you continue to develop your policies:

1. **Accessibility**
   Your library needs to reflect the needs of all users (including student and staff) and administrators. Brown (2017) explains that "a carefully, intentionally designed library learning commons is intended to be a completely safe, accessible environment for the entire school community" (p. 17). In order to create an open and welcoming environment, each choice you make regarding the library organization and services should focus on accessibility, inclusion and equity. Carefoot (2003) outlines several aspects of library policy that focus on the users' needs.

- Facility: The physical space in the library should be welcoming and accessible for all learners. There should be different areas of the library that serve various functions. For example, you can create a quiet reading or studying space for students with comfortable furniture and minimal décor. You can also set up spaces for group instruction or collaborative learning, or a technology-focused area with computer stations. You can arrange a variety of shelves and displays for students to easily access different resources. All the areas of the library should be "readily available and usable by all students regardless of their physical or intellectual abilities" (Carefoot, 2003, p. 69). The *Standards of Practice for School*

Library Learning Commons includes specific objectives, growth indicators, and examples for "designing learning environments to support participatory learning" (Canadian Library Association, 2014, p. 10).

- Entrance and Décor: The entrance of the library often plays a significant role in enticing students and staff to enter the space. I would recommend you start with keeping the glass double doors at the entrance open during school hours (and perhaps also before and after school). This simple action may encourage a more inviting environment. Since the library is situated at the end of a hallway where not many students walk by, I would also recommend you change the sign of the library to be more inviting. You mentioned that the sign currently reads 'School Library', which implies a limited definition of the library space you are providing. Consider renaming the sign to read 'School Library Learning Commons'. The simple change in title may provide a more dynamic and multifaceted definition of the school library and how it can serve the student's learning needs. You can also add an inviting welcome sign at the end of the hallway to bring more attention to the main entrance. The décor of the library also plays a role in the library environment. Goldfinch (2005) recommends student-friendly décor, such as large and simple signage, graphics to support text, and consistently themed visuals. You can eventually also add students work displays which reflect your philosophy and mission of student-centered learning.

- Language: The procedures that you put into place about the use of the library will influence the way students feel when they use the library. Setting clear expectations and responsibilities is important, but equally important is the way in which those expectations are communicated. I recommend that you use positive language in your policy. Johnson (2010) provides two contrasting versions of welcome signs that show how language can be quite powerful. For example, in his 'Left Overshoe School Library' the sign reads "no cell phone or texting", "no talking", no eating or drinking", compared to his 'Right Overshoe School Library, which reads "please use your phone quietly", "please consume carefully", and the library is for learning. What interests you?" (Johnson, 2010).

Brown (2007) provides a number of guiding questions to consider when creating an "equity-based environment through décor and language" (p. 3):
  o Is the space authentically inviting to all who enter?
  o Does the space reflect a wide range of learning needs and opportunities?
  o Can students change and adapt the space to meet their evolving learning needs?
  o Upon entering the space would others be able to identify our values and beliefs about how children learn?
  o Whose needs are being met?
  o When we discuss the space do we use language that clearly indicates student voice and ownership are at the centre of our planning and practice?
  o Does our signage, wall décor, entry doors, etc., represent our students' thinking, creativity, and communication needs? (Brown, 2007, p. 3)

In my opinion, tailoring the library facilities, entrance/décor, and language is a great starting point for you because it will help you welcome students and staff into the library. From there, you can build relationships with your clientele and then start to tailor your other policies. I recommend you read the article *"Student Access to the Library"* (Carefoot, 2003). The authour explains the additional policies that you can adjust to create a user-entered and accessible library environment, including service, collection, organization, access to information, privacy, voluntary use, and technology.

2. Being Culturally Responsive
"A carefully, intentionally designed library learning commons is intended to be a completely safe, accessible environment for the entire school community" (Brown, 2007, p. 17). Although I used this quote to explain accessibility, it also applies in the context of creating a culturally responsive environment for students. The available resources and the policies you develop have the power to create open dialogue for students about oppression, equity, and diversity. *Culturally responsive pedagogy* can be defined as being a part of an "*inclusive education system … [that] identifies ways to remove discriminatory biases and barriers to student achievement and well-being that relate to ethnicity and race, faith, family structure and socio-economic status as well as sexual orientation, ability and mental health*" (Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2013, p. 2).

Your choices and policies can send a message to students that you value inclusion and equity, which will create a safe environment where students feel acknowledged and celebrated. For example, at my school our Teacher Librarian displays a selection of books relating to social justice, racism, women's rights, SOGI, and diversity. She also shares read-aloud books from diverse authours who tell stories from various perspectives, as part of her effort to practice culturally responsive teaching. Our school has a high number of ELL students, so she ensures there are books available for students in their home language.

Brown (2007) provides a number of guiding questions to consider when "fostering equity and social justice in the book collection" (p. 2):

- Is there obvious or hidden bias?
- Whose voice is being heard?
- Whose voice is left out?
- How are power and oppression addressed?
- Are we reinforcing a stereotype or "single story"?

Making sure that you reflect accessibility and culturally responsiveness are essential in cultivating a welcoming environment. You can apply your policies by promoting them in informal settings, such as conversations with your clientele. As you start to bring more people into the library, it is crucial to build meaningful relationships with your clientele.

The Importance of Relationships *Guiding question: How can I make sure all my clientele feel valued?*

I believe the key to creating an environment that fosters belonging, community, and shared respect is building relationships with the students, staff, administrators. As a Teacher-Librarian, you will consistently be interacting with almost the entire school community, therefore your relationships with the community will directly affect their engagement with the SLLC.

Relationships with Students

I strongly recommend you take the time to really get to know your students and show them you value them as people. Toor and Weisburg (2015) outline three practical ways to cultivate meaningful relationships with students:

- Simply smile and build rapport with the students. Your friendly demeanour will make them feel safe and encourage them to build a connection with you. Have natural dialogue with your students daily and represent yourself as a friendly face that is available to help them whenever needed.
- Learn student names quickly so that you can personally greet them during conversations.
- Build mutual respect by treating them in way that shows you prioritize their learning and time (pp. 75-76)

Toor and Weisburg (2015) also provide useful strategies when managing the school library environment, such as being an active listener, dealing with noise, approaches to discipline, and assessment. I also recommend you get involved with extra-curricular student activities such as coaching a sports team or leading student council.

Relationships with Staff

Collaboration is the foundation of your relationships with staff members at your school. I strongly recommend you have initiate conversations with the staff about their teaching interests, your shared philosophies and mission, your areas of expertise, and how you can best support them. You don't have to be an expert in everything, but you can eventually build a collaboration culture in your school by initiating it with your colleagues. Toor and Weisburg (2013) explain various approaches to institute collaboration and connection with teachers, including:

- Grounding your philosophy and finding teachers who also share aspects of your philosophy
- Building trust and relationships
- Taking baby steps to develop collaboration
- Becoming an instructional partner

I recommend you include the staff member voice in your planning team. This will ensure you have a wide range of perspectives in your planning and encourage staff members to engage more positively with the SLLC. You will be able to contribute your perspective in developing and implementing the library programs and services that will best suit your school's needs. Your leadership will ensure that the library directly contributes to the school's mission and goals. Within the school community, your instruction can provide "school-wide continuity and cohesiveness through activities such as cross-curricular inquiry projects and interdisciplinary learning unit (IFLA, 2015, p. 28), making you a valuable partner in collaborative projects within the school community.

Relationships with Administrators

Finally, building a strong working relationship with your administrator is important because it will ultimately help you strengthen programs and improve school libraries. It is key that you approach your principal with confidence, preparedness, and knowledge about your position. Be open with your administrator and make sure you provide opportunities for informal

communication (unscheduled visits, chats, and email) as well as formal communication (reports, memos, meetings, and evaluations) (Toor & Weisburg, 2013). Together, you and your administrator can build a strong learning community.

I hope that my advice will help you in starting your role as the Teacher-Librarian. Although you have a some work ahead of you, just remember that you can play a significant role in the school community. Be yourself, and let your philosophy and vision shine through in your actions and policies. Let's stay connected as you continue with your role.

References

Asselin, M., Branch, J. L., Oberg, D., & Doiron, R. (2003). *Achieving information literacy: standards for schoo library programs in Canada.* Ottawa: Canadian School Library Association: Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada.

Bertland, L. (n.d.). Library Media Center Management. Retrieved February 05, 2021, from https://www.sldirectory.com/libsf/resf/manage.html

Brown, J. (2017). Equity and Social Justice in The Library Learning Commons (Links to an external site.). In *Canadian School Libraries Research Archive.*

Canadian Library Association (CLA). 2014. Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada. Available: http://llsop.canadianschoollibraries.ca/wpcontent/ uploads/2016/09/llsop.pdf

Carefoot, L. (2003). Student Access to the School LibraryLinks to an external site..*Teacher Librarian*,30(4), 69–71.

Goldfinch, E. (2005). The Friendly School Library: Making Students Feel WelcomeLinks to an external site.. *Library Media Connection*, 23(4) 36-37.

Husid, W. (2013). Collaboration: Make It Happen in Your SchoolLinks to an external site.. *Library Media Connection,*31(4), 42–44.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2015). IFLA School Library Guidelines. 2nd revised edition.

Johnson, D. (2012). Twenty + Years of Working with Advisory Groups. *Blue Skunk Blog.*

MacDonell, C. (2004). Essential Documents for School Libraries: Do You Have Them?. *Library Media Connection,* 22(7), 18-19.

Mardis, Marcia A. (2016). The collection program in schools: Concepts and Practices. (6th ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. (2013). Culturally responsive pedagogy: Towards equity and inclusivity in Ontario schools [PDF]. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_ResponsivePedagogy.pdf

Toor, R., & Weisburg, H. K. (2015). *New on the Job: A School Librarian's Guide to Success*. 2nd edition. Chicago: American Library Association.