

“Be a little careful about your library. Do you foresee what you will do with it? Very little to be sure. But the real question is, what it will do with you? You come here and get books that will open your eyes, and your ears and your curiosity, and turn you inside out or outside in.”
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

What does the media specialist do to each person that crosses the threshold of a school media center? As a media specialist it is my job to make a difference in the lives of students, teachers, administration and the community through my roles as a teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and a program administrator. As a teacher I will need to nurture students who will, “possess the knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship” (2008, Wools, p.12) which is one tall order. As an instructional partner I will need to form collaborative partnerships with students, staff, administrators and all who are stakeholders. I liken the role of information specialist to that of Google. A search engine, a tool designed to search for information--a media specialist a tool for information literacy. Lastly, the role of program administrator, the one which manages all the activities of the school media center program, is one of budgeting, marketing, collection development and performing other duties or responsibilities as requested. As the media specialist we have a job that can not only affect student achievement on a daily basis but, one in which we grow and nurture critical thinkers, problem solvers, and change agents for the 21st century.

The teacher role is one that instructs students, teachers, administrators and stakeholders. I will understand learning principles and the responsibility to turn learning over to the learner. As a media specialist, I can co-teach and coach in the classroom. Teaching is the imparting of knowledge but coaching is taking what has been taught and guiding the learner along the way, celebrating in their victories and supporting them through their struggles. My learners will be students, staff, administrators, PTA, parents and the community. I also will be a life-long learner by engaging in professional development. It is important to advocate for my profession by being a teacher at all times—sharing what is happening in the classroom, in the media center and by educating others about the role of the media specialist. I will be a voice for my vocation, teaching. The content standards will ensure the content of what I teach but the integrationist role is to make sure that technology and literacy skills are not learned in isolation but become common threads of all that is learned. My goal for teaching as a media specialist is for all students, at all levels to become information literate and responsible consumers of information. “To know where you can find anything, that in short, is the largest part of learning.” (Anonymous)

“What is most important is student learning, and the most effective learning takes place when teachers and library media specialists collaborate.”(Harvey, 2008, p. 20) That statement underscores why our role as instructional partner is so important with the classroom teacher. As we partner with teachers we also need to give projects that encourage students to develop

collaboration skills. Collaboration is not only a 21st century skill but one that will foster acceptance of those who are different from one another. Collaboration moves students to a higher level of thinking. Collaboration will be even more important as the new content standards will be released in the next few weeks. The new Ohio Standards will have literacy and technology skills built into the content standards, so collaboration is going to be essential. Showing how we collaborate will go a long way, Morellion stated, (2007, p. 47) "We should approach all school library program stakeholders....show them the value of our role as instructional partners...these stakeholders can become our advocates and speak on behalf of integrated, effective school library programs..."

Effective schools also have a media specialist who is an information specialist. I will be the schools meta-search engine. I teach students to use a search engine to locate the information they need, to evaluate, extract what they need, cite their sources and use the information to solve the problem which they have been assigned. That is what a media specialist does on a daily basis as administrators and teachers pose the problem of what information is needed to raise student achievement. I will research, order, and make available the resources as we collaboratively work together. With students I will stimulate interest in using information and ideas to problem solve. I will ignite the love of literature with students so they will want to read for pleasure and become life-long readers. I will be the information expert who staff and students turn to when they need print or digital resources. Knowing that I am the information expert I will attend professional development, conferences and belong to professional associations so that I can remain current and cutting edge. All students and staff will be information literate because these are skills that they will need throughout their entire life. As the information specialist it is my job to integrate these skills across the curriculum.

Lastly, the role of program administrator is to lead, manage and promote all activities of my school library media center. It will be my job to develop and manage the budget, making sure we are getting the biggest bang for the bucks that we get. I will be in charge of the staff and volunteers which work in the media center making sure they follow the policies procedures that we have developed for our department. Collection development will be ongoing, through the processes of weeding, inventory and the purchasing of print resources, journals, equipment and technology. As program administrator it is my job to see that there are appropriate, uncensored resources for all students and that these resources are used responsibly. I will meet regularly with administrators, curriculum committees, advisory boards and the community to develop relationships and advocate for our school media program.

In order to be an effective media specialist I will need to be a teacher, an instructional partner, an information specialist and a program administrator. If all these roles that the media

specialist is responsible for seem a little overwhelming, it is comforting that we are not doing this alone. Annette Lamb, from her website, *The School Library Media Specialist* (2009) states:

However all of the roles are important and demanded by today's library media program. Of course a teacher librarian can't do all of these things alone. That's the reason that collaboration, leadership, and technology are three key themes in a library media program:

Through **collaboration**, the media specialist is able to accomplish more than he or she could alone.

Through **leadership**, the teacher librarian can recruit others to participate in activities.

Through **technology**, the library media specialist can make center operations run smoothly, creating more time to focus on the most important program goals.

Using collaboration, leadership, advocacy and technology I will be able to move my 21st century school media center forward, making a difference to all those who step across the threshold of the media center where I, Karen Reiber, hold the title of media specialist.

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