**Focus Group Summary Notes**

Grant Staff Present: Deb Kachel, Project Director, attended the Hershey and Philadelphia Focus Groups; Sandy Zelno, Education Law Center, attended the Pittsburgh, Greensburg and Hershey Focus Groups; Nancy Potter, Education Law Center, attended all focus groups; Mary K. Biagini, University of Pittsburgh, attended all focus groups.

**Participants:** See attached list.

**We held four meetings:**

1: 3/27/12 at Achieva in Pittsburgh

2: 3/28/12 at the Westmoreland IU7 in Greensburg

3: 4/12/12 at the Hershey Lodge in Hershey

4: 4/18/12 at the United Way in Philadelphia

The meetings were both informational and consensus gathering. The purpose of the separate meetings was to see how different things might be for different geography and different people.

**There were for 4 goals for these meetings:**

1. Participants will gain information about the status of school libraries in PA and key research findings about the impact of school library programs on student learning and academic achievement.

2. Participants will clarify which components of the school library program infrastructure they value most through consensus building activities.

3. Participants will disseminate information learned to their constituencies

**The structure of the meetings was as follows:**

1. Each meeting lasted 2 hours, with a 30-minute period at the beginning for checking, completing forms and refreshments.
   a. This time was used to distribute registration materials, handouts, nametags & tents, reimbursement forms, and release forms

2. This was followed by a short welcome and introductions by the ELC staff.
   a. ELC staff introduced the IMLS Grant members, as well as the participants by name and affiliation

3. Next, Deb Kachel presented an overview of the IMLS Grant.

4. The bulk of the meeting was led by Mary Kay Biagini and included an overview of the PA School Library Study, a discussion of components of a school library program (see attached list) and their value, and concluded with consensus gathering on the valued components.
a. The overview provided an overview of the status of school libraries in PA and key research findings on the components of infrastructure for school libraries and the effect of school library programs on student learning and academic achievement.

b. Mary Kay then led a structured discussion of what components of the school library program infrastructure participants value more. She provided examples of each component. Participants were then asked to silently generate her or his own list of valued components, which were then posted on the walls in groupings, unique to each meeting.

c. During the consensus gathering, Mary Kay used a modified nominal group technique and had each participant vote by placing 3 different colored stickers on 1st, 2d & 3d valued components. She then led a discussion on the voting patterns and led the group to a consensus.

Results

While the individual focus groups included unique participants and each produced unique results, themes did emerge across the groups. Specifically, each group identified staffing as a high priority. Resources and collaboration were the other two reoccurring themes.

The members of the Pittsburgh Focus Group identified Resources and Staffing as the two most important components. This was the group most focused on resources. Members also identified Teaching, Funding, Access and Technology as important components. The members did not identify any component as unimportant.

The Greensburg focus group identified Staff as the most important component, followed by resources and collaboration. Among the groups, this was the group that put the most emphasis on collaboration, both within the school and between the school library and public library.

The Hershey focus groups identified staffing and collaboration as the top components. This group put the most emphasis on the position of the librarian in the school. The group also identified resources and access to those resources as top components.

The Philadelphia group identified Technology as the most important component, followed by staffing. More so than other groups, this group focused on the librarians’ role outside the library in being a liaison between technology and teachers.