Your “Principal” Partnership: Communicating Library Program Success Is Key to Your Success

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The PowerPoint slides and all related materials, including examples of annual and monthly library reports can be found on a LibGuide at http://paschoollibraryproject.org/AASL2015.
Quick Poll

How often do you communicate with your principal?

- 4 = Several times a week
- 3 = Several times a month
- 2 = When necessary
- 1 = Not very often

Why do you communicate with your principal?
The Daily Life of a Principal

“Being an administrator is like living in an Indiana Jones movie.”
Hartzell, p. 96
The Realities

- Research tells us that most principals value school library programs based on whether their experiences with school librarians have been good or bad!

- School administrators don’t learn how to leverage school library programs to improve student learning in their preparatory coursework.

Gary Hartzell, former school administrator and author of *Building Influence for the School Librarian: Tenets, Targets, and Tactics* (Linworth, 2003)

“Partners are to be courted and supported.” (p. 99)

“Relationships are the foundation of influence.” (p. 98)
How well do you know your principal?

Objectives for the Year
Do you know what these are?
What’s your school district’s mission?

Professional Background
e.g., subject taught, colleges attended, other positions

Personal Background
e.g., family, hobbies, sports, avocation

Values/Beliefs
Based on your experiences, what does your principal think about:
- Libraries
- Technology
- Students

Suggestions: Google your principal, call former school librarian, ask other teachers who know him/her better

“You can’t change the principal, but any insights you gain can help you to better manage your half of the relationship.”
(Hartzell, p. 106)
What’s your principal’s perspective on the school library?

- Based on minimal background, education, or experience in school library management or evaluation
- Based on negative legal issues—e.g., censorship, copyright violation, student behavior problems
- As a scheduling solution for prep period for classroom teachers
- As just one aspect of the total school program

Prove your worth to your administrator
How can you create a positive working relationship with your principal?

The principal’s success and reputation are based on:

- student achievement,
- quality of the school climate,
- community’s perception of the school

Your task:
How can you help the principal achieve success?
Trust—how can you build it with your principal?

- Respect your principal’s time and energy
- Focus on student needs not on your needs
- Listen with an open mind
- Respect confidentiality
- Show sincere interest in & support for your principal’s objectives
- Bring a sense of integrity and fairness
Why is communicating with your principal important?

- **Awareness:** You serve as an advocate for students

- **Building trust and support for the library program:**
  - Funding & staffing to meet library objectives
  - Planning, collaborating & professional development with teachers
  - Building flexibility into library scheduling
  - Contributing on key school committees
  - Demonstrating worth on your annual evaluation & sustaining job satisfaction
What’s your principal’s personality type? What’s yours?

- Controller OR delegator
- Detail OR “big picture”
- Extrovert, introvert, OR ambivert
- Task-oriented OR relationship-oriented
- Organization lover OR free agent

How do you each react to:

- Criticism
- Stress
- Overloaded schedule

Free Personality Instrument

The Keirsey Temperament Sorter®-II (KTS®-II) is the most widely used personality instrument in the world. It is a powerful 70 question personality instrument that helps individuals discover their personality type. (Temperament Types- Guardians, Idealists, Artisans, and Rationals)

Do you have a **Generation Gap**?

- Silent Generation/Traditionalists: 1925-45 (70+)
- Baby Boomers: 1946-64 (ages 50s-60s)
- Generation X: 1965-80 (35-50)
- Millennials: 1981-95 (20-34)

Do you have a **Gender Gap**?

- Possible differing perspectives between men and women
## Generational Work Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditionalists (70+)</th>
<th>Baby Boomers (50s-60s)</th>
<th>Generation X (35 – 50)</th>
<th>Millennials (20 – 34)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical</strong></td>
<td><strong>Optimistic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skeptical</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hopeful</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patient, loyal, hardworking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teamwork and cooperation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self-reliant</strong></td>
<td><strong>Need meaningful work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respectful of authority</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ambitious</strong></td>
<td><strong>Risk-taking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Values diversity and change</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rule follower</strong></td>
<td><strong>Workaholic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Balances work &amp; personal life</strong></td>
<td><strong>Technology savvy</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A literature review on generational diversity by psychologist Constance Patterson, PhD, indicates differences in work ethic and values among traditionalists, baby boomers, gen Xers and millennials. [http://www.apa.org/monitor/jun05/stereotypes.aspx](http://www.apa.org/monitor/jun05/stereotypes.aspx).
How can you communicate with your principal regularly?

- Invite the principal to the library for specific activities and events and see you in action with students and teachers.
- Send the principal short, readable reports regularly.
  (Woody Allen: “Eighty percent of success is showing up”)
- Cumulate weekly, monthly, and grade-period communications to produce your annual report.
How does your principal like to communicate?

- **Format**: “reader” OR “listener”
- **Meeting**: formal OR informal
- **Time**: “lark” OR “nightingale”
- **Style**: “techie” OR traditional
Focus on student needs not on your needs

Avoid saying, “I need . . .”
Try instead
- “If we had ___, students could . . .”
- “How might we together . . .?”

Self Check: After finishing a communication, count the number of times you use the following: I, me, my, mine and how many times you use: we, us, our, ours
How can you balance your tone?

- Communicate considerately & professionally
- Compliment when possible
- Volunteer within the school
- Don’t complain or beg continuously
- Don’t belabor points or point out issues that are beyond your principal’s control
- Emphasize positive things your principal has done for the library program in the past
Be sure to **brand** all your communications

On every communication, everyone should always know immediately by its “look” that it’s from the library/librarian

- Use a logo, graphic, short quote
- Consider a distinctive font, color, design, border
- Avoid italics, underlining (too hard to read)
- Mix font sizes and colors for visual appeal
- **TL,DR:** use bullet points instead of paragraphs

Your “look” represents the library and reinforces your message
How can you incorporate evidence?

- Try to provide **authentic evidence** that your library program matters in the teaching/learning process and helps students achieve academic success
- If you aren’t already, collect **base-line data** to provide context and comparison for progress, growth, improvement, and innovation
- Collect at least one piece of evidence **every week**
- Present your evidence in understandable **“plain English”**
- Tell a story that focuses on students and how the library program helps them as students and as individuals
How can your written communication be more effective?

- Propose **solutions** (Plan A, B, and maybe C); don’t just identify a problem
- Be concise & organized (Beware TL, DR—too long, didn’t read)
- Be clear & understandable (**no jargon**)
- Use **vivid language**
- Tell a **story**
- Be **specific; use examples**
How does your communication “read”? 

In every format:

- Be sure you convey what you mean & not be misinterpreted

- Don’t send in haste: “Write once, read twice, revise & send”—the mantra of the Penn Hills (PA) School District

- Consider what you have on social media that reflects the upon your school district and might violate student confidentiality or acceptable use policy
How can you capture your principal’s attention with your monthly and annual reports?

- Appeal to the principal’s working/communication style (e.g., data and facts or warm “heart” stories)
- Select a format that appeals (e.g., video, infographic, slides, pdf)
- Decide where to place it on your library’s website to share with others

Many free web tools can be used: SlideShare, Picktochart, YouTube, Issu, LiveBinders, LibGuide, etc.

See examples at the LibGuide for this session at http://paschoollibraryproject.org/AASL2015
   Annual Reports
   Monthly Reports
What about your content?

- Focus on how the school library programs helps kids and advances their learning
- Consider your purpose—how do you want your principal to interpret your message?
- Align to your principal’s issues and language, not yours
- Incorporate research findings

How can you make these interesting?

- How you collaborate with specific teachers, depts., grade levels
- How you promote student reading
- What resources/topics students are interested in
- What PD you provide to teachers
- Special programs/events
- How students & teachers are using the library
What about your structure & format?

Structure your content to align with:
- Danielson’s four domains or with the framework used in your evaluation
- AASL’s *Empowering Learners*

(See article on Annual Report and the one-page guide at the session LibGuide)

- Use a variety of formats, (e.g., photos, video, graphs, charts, links to other websites)
- Include short blocks of texts (e.g., info, personal “heart-appeal” stories, quotes from students & teachers)
How can you use your Annual Report effectively?

- Post on library website; push out on social media
- Email link to other administrators & board members or produce copies
- Include in your professional portfolio as part of your annual evaluation
- Ask principal for feedback (content? format? length?)
- Maintain notes for changes the next year
- Compare data over time to determine growth and trends
Activity: Examine Sample Reports

1. Group around participants with laptops

2. Go to http://paschoollibraryproject.org/annualrpts or http://paschoollibraryproject.org/reports

3. Analyze examples

Discuss:
What did you find that would appeal to your principal?

- Content
- Format
- Organization/structure
- Length
- Head & heart appeal
Through ongoing and focused communications, a strong partnership between a principal and school librarian enhances school culture and increase student learning!

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