THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER AND SCHOOL LIBRARIAN COLLABORATION ON READING

by

Laura Schlueter

An Abstract of a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science and Information Services in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development University of Central Missouri

August, 2015
ABSTRACT

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Increasing reading proficiency across content areas and grade levels is a goal of school districts across the United States. The school librarian as a collaborator can influence reading proficiency across content areas and grade levels. This review of the literature will show how collaborating, using effective systemic practices that engage students in literacy activities and higher level thinking, assessments, and good teaching methods can raise student reading proficiency.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement Of The Problem

Reading proficiency levels are low across the United States and school districts work year after year with students to raise these scores. With the implementation of Common Core State Standards, comprehending informational text and informational literacy skills have risen in importance across grade levels and content areas. School district administrators and teachers are working together to implement strategies and teaching methods that will increase student progress. The school librarian, as a teacher at the center for literacy learning, can provide instruction and professional development to raise student proficiency in reading.

Research shows that many things can influence student reading proficiency, and collaboration between teachers and school librarians has proven to be effective. Researchers have found that the school librarian who is viewed as an instructional partner in teaching reading can provide information and digital literacy learning and raise proficiency levels across grade levels.

Teachers and school librarians who collaborate can create lessons, co-teach lessons, and find systemic practices that increase student learning. They do this by assessing students and monitoring their progress to guide instruction and provide support or increase challenge throughout the unit. Collaboration takes time, and teachers who have been a part of successful collaboration with the school librarian show improvement in student learning. Working together provides two teachers with the expertise to assess, teach, and monitor the progress of students. They can step in at the time of need and provide support for students who are falling behind and challenge those who have already reached the learning targets.
Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this study is to review the literature and discover ways to increase student proficiency in reading through collaboration between teachers and school librarians. This study reflects the work of several researchers on the impact of collaboration on reading comprehension and proficiency. The study also states how the role of the school librarian has changed and evolved according to the American Association of School Librarian Standards.

The results of the study show that teacher and school librarian collaboration positively impacts student reading proficiency. Teachers and school librarians who collaborate can provide learning opportunities for students that can show improvement of 25-50 percent. The school librarian who is involved in planning, implementing, and assessing growth in literacy can support teachers and students by co-teaching and providing professional development. The impact of collaboration between the school librarian and teacher has a positive impact on student reading proficiency.

Research Questions

With the implementation of Common Core State Standards and teacher accountability for student learning, teachers, and school librarians have to be involved in planning and implementing lessons. These research questions guided this study of the impact that collaboration between teachers and school librarians has on reading proficiency.

1. How does collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers impact student reading proficiency and comprehension scores?

2. What system wide practices raise reading proficiency and comprehension levels?
3. What forms of assessment can be used to monitor student progress and guide instruction?

4. What methods can be used in the library and classroom to raise reading proficiency levels and comprehension?

**Limitations Of The Study**

The limitations of this study include the limited timeframe available for this study and the availability of peer reviewed journals and texts from individuals with expertise in the area of teacher and school librarian collaboration related to raising reading proficiency. The research included journals, books, and articles dealing with K-12 schools whose teachers collaborate with the school librarian, but, mostly elementary school librarians are represented.

**Definition Of Terms**

This section defines terms that are present in the study that may be unfamiliar.

Collaboration: For this paper, working together to plan, implement, and assess student learning.

Co-teaching: Two or more teachers are working simultaneously to teach lessons.

Fixed schedule: A library schedule that is created by the school librarian to allow all classes to visit the library for a lesson and checkout on a weekly basis. The fixed schedule may or may not be used to provide plan time for the classroom teacher.

Flexible schedule: A library schedule that changes to reflect the needs of teachers and students.

Professional Learning Community (PLC): A group of teachers who plan, implement, and assess curriculum, while monitoring data to guide student learning.

Question – Answer Relationship Strategy (QAR): The question – answer relationship strategy that promotes reading engagement by teaching students to constantly question themselves while reading and discover where the answers are in the reading. Answers to questions
can be visible in a phrase, visible in a paragraph, or deducted using the text and background knowledge.

Request Procedure: A questioning procedure teachers can use in the reading classroom to model good questioning strategies and promote reader engagement.

Research Design

Research for this study was collected from published information by researchers in the field of education, particularly school librarianship. No action research was conducted, nor data collected by the researcher. Articles were collected from these databases, *E-Book Collection*, *EBSCOhost*, *Education Journals*, *Education Research Complete*, and *ProQuest*. These books were used for research as well; *Empowering Learners*, *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*, and *Content Area Literacy*. The terms searched included, “school librarian collaboration,” “reading proficiency,” “teacher collaboration,” “co-teaching reading,” and “raising reading scores.”

Conclusion

This study contains three chapters related to the impact of teacher and school librarian collaboration on reading proficiency. The first chapter was the introduction. The second chapter is the literature review, and the third chapter will answer the questions that were presented in the first chapter. Collaboration between teachers and school librarians is effective in raising reading comprehension and proficiency scores.
CHAPTER 2
A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Raising student reading levels and comprehension is a goal of school districts across the United States. According to the 2013 report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 35% of fourth grade students and 36% of eighth grade students in the U.S. are at or above a proficient level in reading (NAEP). Many things can influence the level of proficient readers in the U.S. One that will be explored in the first section of this paper is the impact of collaboration between teachers and the school librarian on reading levels and comprehension. The second section reviews literature related to systemic ways to raise student reading levels. These are meta practices that guide specific instructional activities. The third section explains assessments that can be used to guide instruction, and the final section describes methods of teaching reading in the library and classroom.

The School Librarian as a Collaborator in the Learning Community

Raising student reading scores to the proficient level can be done with the school librarian at the center of reading learning as a collaborator and instructional leader. The role of the school librarian has changed and evolved; the librarian is an instructional partner in teaching student literacy skills. Teachers and school librarians who work together to plan, teach, and assess learning have an impact on student reading levels. Collaboration that accomplishes this is when the librarian creates a flexible library schedule, coteaches lessons with classroom teachers, and provides expertise in teaching reading. Research shows that when the school librarian works in collaboration with teachers, student learning increases.

The positive impact on student reading proficiency through the collaborative relationship between the school librarian and teacher is documented by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). “The school librarian’s role has changed in the 21st century; the school
The librarian is a leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator” (AASL, Empowering Learners 536). The mission statement of the AASL states, “The school librarian empowers students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information” (Empowering Learners 158). Through collaboration with teachers and students, the school librarian can create and implement lessons that meet the needs of all teachers and students. According to Karen Gavigan, when school librarians and classroom teachers collaborate to teach the standards they can create lifelong learners (75). It is a belief of the AASL that reading is a lifelong learning skill and a key indicator of success in school and life.

Collaboration is defined as the process of teachers and school librarian’s working together to plan, teach, and assess learning experiences using standard assessments (Loertscher, “Collaboration and Coteaching” 9). Building a collaborative environment takes time, flexibility, and relationship skills, and making it work is challenging. Teachers may feel that collaboration is too time consuming to undertake. Research suggests that the school librarian can provide professional development to discuss the benefits of collaboration on student achievement. Schomberg, McCabe, and Fink say time, flexible scheduling, and support from the administration are needed to form a collaborative environment (10). A flexible schedule is one that changes according to the needs of the staff and students, as opposed to a fixed schedule, which has students come to the library with their class during a regular, set time. A flexible schedule in the library allows the school librarian time to plan and implement lessons as they are needed in coordination with the classroom curriculum. A flexible library schedule can also allow the school librarian and teachers time for collaboration during the school day. For example, the librarian can host grade level planning sessions in the library.
Ken Haycock mentions that 30 years ago flexible scheduling was seen as important so that teachers and the librarian could plan together. He goes on to say that if the school librarian is providing a free period for the teachers on a fixed schedule, they cannot collaborate (5) unless time before and after school, lunch breaks, and weekends are used for collaborative planning (Schomberg et al. 10). However, with the demands of a rigid curriculum in one district, lack of time, was given by teachers for dropping out of a case study by Montiel-Overall that explored ways of successful collaboration (40). The teachers felt that collaborating with the librarian would take time away from teaching their curriculum and too much time to collaborate.

Successful collaboration between the classroom teachers and the school librarian results in expanded and energized planning, and more resources are used to meet a wide variety of student needs (Schomberg et al. 11). During collaboration, teachers decide how they want to present the lessons. Coteaching with the school librarian has proven to be effective when teaching reading lessons. According to Kerry Pierce Conklin co-teaching lessons can be done three different ways. One is when “one teaches and one supports.” The support teacher can circulate and clarify information as needed. The second technique is parallel teaching, where the group is divided, and the teacher and librarian teach the same lesson simultaneously. This provides for smaller group instruction. Team teaching, the third technique, when both teachers are providing instruction to the large group, provides the expertise of both teachers throughout the lessons (48). As the teacher and school librarian teach together, the students begin to see the school librarian as a member of the instructional team, not just the library teacher they see one day a week (Schomberg et al. 11). As Lora Lee Canter says, “The basis for collaboration is equal partners working together for a shared purpose” (7). In addition, when the school librarian is a
co-teacher, this lowers the student to teacher ratio at the point of instruction allowing for growth in student learning (Moreillon, “Reading and the Library Program” 28).

Improving reading proficiency through collaboration is impacted by having two experts in their fields available to students when needed during the learning process. Loertscher states, “A successful experience is not just that there are two adults in the room but the expertise that both bring” (“Collaboration and Coteaching” 7). In one of Loertscher’s studies teachers were surveyed about results when teaching alone. The research found that with a single teacher 50% of students met their expectations. When the teachers and school librarian collaborated, the results were between 70-100% (“Collaboration and Coteaching” 13). This study shows the impact of collaborating on student learning.

Reading scores improve when the school librarian is a leader and collaborator in the school. Lance cites studies that show students perform better when the school librarian is part of the planning and teaching team. In particular, reading improves when the school librarian teaches information literacy, and provides one to one tutoring for students at the time of need (Lance 29). The American Association of Librarians (AASL) standards support the school librarian as a teacher and instructional partner who engages in collaboration with teachers and administrators to support student achievement in reading (Standards for the 21st Century Learner in Action 307). In a four-state study, Lance found that increased library staffing allows the school librarian to teach more information literacy classes, which brings more students to the library, and raises reading scores. Lance also found that the more the school librarian collaborated with teachers, provided information materials for them, planned with and delivered information to them, and provided professional development for them, the higher the students’ achievement (Lance 29). Scott and Teale found that teachers of urban learners, in particular, identified professional
development as a need in their schools to learn the methods that could improve reading levels (339). Lance states that the school librarian should be seen as a professional colleague in teaching and learning. If the school librarian is not seen as an educational partner in her school, assessing the collaborative environment and seeking change is recommended. David Loertscher states that a successful school librarian is a leader who is known throughout the school as a learning expert in an information and technology rich world (“What Flavor is Your Library” 11).

Teachers in the building understand they need the expertise of the school librarian when they are teaching information and digital literacy skills. Loertscher also states that the school librarian understands reading in all of the content areas: social studies, health, and science, and can collaborate with teachers in all areas of the curriculum. When the teacher and school librarian work together, students have the expertise of two teachers who have the ability to provide support when needed. To identify students who need support, the school librarian provides data collected throughout the collaborative units and links it to achievement data.

Collaboration does not have to end when the school day ends. Open access to the library beyond the school day can support student reading. If the library is open longer hours, students can come before or after school for more support from the librarian. Collaboration with teachers and students can also be virtual (Moreillon, “Reading and the Library Program” 26). Collaboration tools on the library website can be used by students and teachers. For example, students can view pathfinders, resources created by teachers and librarians that support the curriculum, check assignments, access databases, and find resources for studying. Students can also access the library blog and read book reviews that have been posted on the website.

The impact of collaboration between the school librarian and classroom teachers can be assessed several ways. One technique is a collaboration log that can be kept by the school
librarian to document lessons that were made more valuable through collaboration (Champlin and Loertscher 67). A checklist for the administrator and teachers can also be provided to formulate an opinion on whether the school library is meeting the needs of the staff and students. The school librarian can ask himself a series of questions such as; are students limited in the number of books they can check out? Are there lots of interesting books in the library that students are motivated to read (Champlin and Loertscher 69)? Champlin and Loertscher worked with two state of the art libraries, one hired a full-time librarian and set a standard that all teachers had to have a collaborative session with the librarian before they brought their class to the library. The other school opted to hire a clerk to run the library and offered no collaboration. The first school has exciting lessons and learning going on all of the time in the library, and the other was like a lavish babysitting facility (70). Monitoring the progress of students as well as the impact of collaboration on student learning in the library is a path to reaching the standards for successful collaboration set by the AASL.

**Raising Student Reading Levels Through Systemic Practices**

Collaboration between the school librarian and classroom teacher can improve reading proficiency by using effective practices in the classroom and library. Research mentioned in this section of the paper shows that recognizing effective systemic practices like, higher level thinking, active engagement in literacy activities, action research, and collaborating with teachers in Professional Learning Communities can raise students to proficient reading levels.

Student reading levels, fluency, and comprehension show improvement when students are engaged in what they are reading. Taylor et al. found four dimensions of effective reading strategies that lead to student engagement. The first dimension is to support higher level discussion in both reading and writing; second is encouraging independent use of word
recognition and comprehension strategies; third is more coaching by the teacher; guiding and supporting them by providing feedback rather than giving students information, and the fourth dimension is promoting active participation in literacy activities (7-8). The classroom teacher and school librarian can collaborate and promote these dimensions, especially, higher level thinking, coaching, and active participation in literacy activities. Taylor et al found that when students are engaged in higher level thinking they make connections to the text, think about thematic elements in the text, and interpret why the characters interact the way they do (6). Higher level thinking like this helps students as they try to solve reading problems and comprehend the text. Lower level thinking practices that students may be involved in for comprehension practice are answering multiple choice questions or filling in a worksheet. These types of activities require less cognitive effort by students and result in a lack of growth in reading. Teachers and librarians foster higher level thinking by asking questions that lead to dialogue between students and teachers. Students read the text closely and infer the author’s meaning and answer open-ended questions posited by their teachers.

The research also shows that teachers who are actively engaged in active literacy learning with their students have higher growth in reading. Taylor et al. watched for growth indicators as they were observing students respond in the classroom. The active indicators were; reading, writing, chorally responding, and sharing ideas with a partner. Passive responses were noted as well, like reading turn-taking, oral turn-taking, and listening to the teacher. The researchers found that the more the student was involved or actively participating in their learning, the greater the growth in reading (Taylor et al. 7). The results of the study also found that student reading fluency increased in first-grade classrooms when teachers used higher level questioning (11). Second through fifth-grade students improved their fluency when they were involved in
more active reading and coaching by teachers as well. In comparison, it was noted that those second through fifth-grade students who were given phonics instruction showed a decrease in reading fluency from the fall to spring assessments.

Collaboration amongst teachers within a primary school to increase reading growth and comprehension by students resulted in gains as high as 40% in first grade (Butterfield 319). The administrator in a primary building wanted to find a program that could be implemented to raise awareness and understanding of reading. The psychological approach to research they chose brought the staff together to raise awareness of individual and whole school perceptions about reading and set the stage for change. The project was introduced to the teachers after a poor performance review. After the initial research project had been introduced to the teachers, each teacher chose a topic for an action research project about reading conducted in their classroom. The topics were areas of concern in reading. Monthly review and collaborative sessions were attended by all teachers throughout the project. The library was revamped, and reading instruction was integrated across content areas. The teachers and administrators agreed that the action research project was successful and saw reading scores improve. “The staff reported that it enabled them to be in control of their own teaching development. It also provided a safe forum within which staff felt able to admit to their weaknesses and seek support” (324). The school has continued using action research projects. Each year the teachers conduct projects in their classrooms and have adopted this into their school development plan to continue to raise student achievement in reading (325).

Collaboration amongst expert teachers in a study conducted by Topping and Ferguson showed reading improvement in primary students. “These expert teachers explicitly maximized time on task, balanced individual with small-group and whole-class instruction, and engaged in
modeling, questioning and scaffolding” (140). The study found that teachers may or may not be aware of effective behaviors when teaching reading. This is another area where the school librarian may provide support. For example, the librarian might videotape effective instruction in reading and provide support as the teachers are learning these behaviors. This is another form of collaboration and coaching by the school librarian to promote growth in reading.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) are active in schools across the United States. Districts that use PLC’s expect teachers to work in collaborative teams to achieve common goals for student learning. Teams work together to create a guaranteed and viable curriculum for each unit and monitor student learning using assessments that are also created by the team. The teams use this data to guide their instruction and provide intervention as needed by the students (Dufour 28-29). In Ankeny, IA a school with “flat” reading scores implemented collaboration and data analysis through PLC’s and saw reading scores improve and their school taken off the watch list. The teachers noted that employing reading specialists, implementing PLC’s, and putting support systems in place for teachers and students were important factors in the growth in reading scores (Mokhtari, Thoma and Edwards 335). The school librarian, as a leader and coach, is involved in PLC’s as a specialist who can assist teachers, administrators, and students.

Assessments

The school librarian, who is actively involved in a PLC that creates assessments and collects and analyzes data, can facilitate collaboration that can improve reading proficiency and comprehension. He can use assessments to inform teachers of best practices and guide next steps to intervention. The data collected in the library has shifted to student learning, and the school librarian as a coach and instructional partner can assess students informally and formally in the
library. The goal of assessing students is to guide instruction and provide support at the time of need.

According to the AASL standards, there is a shift in data that is collected in the library from measuring the use of the collection to measuring student learning (Harada and Yoshina 16). “This transition challenges librarians to view their curriculum as extending beyond the traditional location and retrieval skills to skills in evaluating, synthesizing, and interpreting information and ideas” says Harada (16). Teachers and school librarians can collect data in the classroom or library, analyze the results, and discuss next steps in their PLC meetings. Three types of assessments that inform and guide instruction in the reading classroom and library are; conferring with students, teacher formative assessment, and common formative assessment created by teachers and librarians collaboratively. Conferring with students in the reading classroom and library helps teachers gain understanding of students’ comprehension of text they are independently reading. A three-minute conference can help the teacher or school librarian decide if support is needed. The conference will guide the intervention needed by the student. Exit slips, a type of teacher created formative assessment, lets the teacher know who understands the concept that was just taught. Formative assessments are given to an individual class at the discretion of the classroom teacher. The third type of assessment in reading is the common formative assessment of students’ knowledge of content and reading skills. These are tests retaken periodically that measure growth. Common formative assessments are created by teachers in their PLC and given to all students in the grade level. A more formal assessment than conferring with students or collecting exit slips, common formative assessment helps teachers compare best practices in different classrooms and differentiate instruction to reteach skills. In addition using a writing prompt is a way of assessing what and how students are thinking before,
during, and after reading that can help teachers plan instructional groups or think alouds (Filkins 4). Rubrics can be created in a collaborative meeting to assess student learning in the classroom or library using writing prompts. These rubrics can assess both content and information literacy learning.

All of these assessment methods help teachers differentiate instruction and meet the individual needs of their students (Morgan et al. 4). Using assessment to know what to do next is the goal Filkins describes, “When we assess out of care, we engage ourselves and our students in the challenging work of taking an inquiry stance, actively seeking to learn more about what they can do and addressing their needs directly, as best we can, in authentic contexts for literacy and learning” (1). When the teacher and librarian agree that the students can improve, have a good understanding of the readers they are assessing, and know the tools to use for assessment, their students will show improvement in reading proficiency.

Methods of Teaching Reading in the Library and the Classroom

The collaborative relationship between the school librarian and teacher has a positive impact on reading proficiency when the team works together to implement effective methods of teaching in the classroom and library. The school librarian and classroom teacher can model, use open-ended questioning, and provide support as needed when coteaching. Teaching students how to use questioning strategies as they are getting ready to read, silently reading, and after reading is effective. Using authentic literature, differentiating instruction, conferring, and the question-answer relationship (QAR) strategy are also effective methods to use in the classroom and library. This final section of the review will explore these methods.

“Purposeful questioning” (Manzo et al. 65-66) can be modeled by the classroom teacher and school librarian when reading texts aloud to students across content areas by asking
questions that bring meaning to the text. The ReQuest Procedure (70) is a constructivist model of this that can be used by teachers and librarians to model good questioning and promote reader engagement, background knowledge activation, and meaningful questioning of the text. In this model, the teacher prepares questions that students would not come up with on their own to get students started on reading the text. After the teacher and students work together, the students read the rest of the piece on their own with a purposeful question in mind. This method can be used as a prereading activity to prepare students for meaningful reading (Manzo et al. 70).

During silent reading, students think while they read. They can use questioning skills that have been modeled by the school librarian and classroom teacher to increase comprehension by asking themselves what the main idea is, if they understood what they just read, or if they should reread. Students can also use a coding strategy to monitor their comprehension by marking paragraphs as they read with letters that represent their cognitive and affective responses. Manzo et al. suggest a coding system for science reading may be; C= Clear, D = Difficult, I* = Important, and S! = Surprising (102). When students finish reading and documenting their learning, they discuss their markings with classmates to better comprehend the text.

A post reading strategy commonly used to check for comprehension is the class discussion, but there are many other post reading strategies promoted by Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas. Jigsaw is an example of a cooperative activity for post reading. Students are divided into groups of four and given the reading assignment. Each student in the group is assigned part of the reading, and then they meet for discussion with other students in the class who read the same section. After this, students meet back in their initial group and discuss the important points of each section of the reading (125).
Two post reading strategies that are more active than Jigsaw are “Inside-Outside Circle” and “Find Someone Who”. The teacher creates discussion questions for Inside-Outside Circle, and students make two circles. The students on the inside ask the questions of the student facing them in the outside circle. The student is given time to answer, or given the answer if they don’t know it, and then the teacher signals for the students to rotate. Students continue to rotate until all of the questions have been proposed, and students have had a chance to answer, and then the inside circle switches to the outside, and the cards change hands. Find Someone Who is also an active way to get students involved in discussing a text. The teacher prepares a worksheet ahead of time that students begin filling out on their own as they are reading or after they have read. After 5-10 minutes, students move around the room and find someone to sit with and compare and discuss the worksheet. A signal is given periodically, and students move around the room to find another person to discuss the reading with. At the end of the class period, students have a good understanding of the reading and their worksheet completed (135-136). These strategies can be implemented in the library or classroom with the school librarian and classroom teacher facilitating the lessons.

The collaborative relationship between the school librarian and classroom teacher can have a positive impact on student reading proficiency when effective methods of teaching reading are in place. Coteaching, as previously mentioned, is a practice that can improve student reading levels. Information literacy standards and comprehension strategies can be cotaught by teachers and school librarians (Morellion, “Reading and the Library Program” 28). Students will have the benefit of two teachers, and teachers will benefit from sharing their expertise while linking reading comprehension strategies and information literacy skills and strategies.
Scott and Teale found that teachers wanted authentic literature to teach their urban students literacy skills. Getting students motivated to read is a need in the urban, as well as suburban and rural school. Authentic literature, interesting and relative to the reader, which has been promoted in both the library program and classroom, can meet this goal. Authentic literature uses figurative and informational language that students use in the communities where they live (Ciecierski and Bintz 18). “When teachers use authentic literature, students learn content area material more efficiently and effectively” according to Ciecierski and Bintz (18). The school librarian as a resource leader can provide the literature, professional development for teachers on locating and curated reading, and then collaborate with them to develop lessons using authentic literature.

The school librarian aligns standards with learning objectives across content areas. Growth in comprehension skills in reading helps students use their inquiry and process skills across all subjects. Kinniburgh and Shaw (19) found that other curricular area instruction has been cut due to the importance of raising reading and math scores on standardized tests. However reading information text is required in the Common Core State Standards, and that text is cross-curricular. The school librarian, familiar with the standards addressed in the school, can spot opportunities to include activities that improve reading skills. In turn growth in comprehension skills in reading helps students use their inquiry and process skills across all subjects that helps develop information literacy skills

The QAR strategy researched by Raphael and Pearson can be used to further reading comprehension in different content areas (220). Students must question themselves as they read informational text, such as science articles that are above their independent level of reading. Raphael and Pearson recommend three strategies for answering questions addressed in the QAR
strategy. Answers can be found visibly in a sentence in the text, found after reading several sentences or a paragraph in the text, or inferred by students using background knowledge (220). Text features can also be used to aid in answering these types of questions (Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas (48). Activities can be created by the school librarian and classroom teacher to introduce and use the QAR strategy. In the primary grades students “learn to read” and as they move through upper elementary, middle, and high school they “read to learn.” The QAR strategy is appropriate for all grades and all subject areas. As students develop comprehension skills using QAR they become better readers of informational text and more likely to be “reading to learn” (Kinniburgh and Shaw 20).

The school librarian and classroom teacher can increase reading growth by collaborating and implementing digital literacies in the library and classroom. Most school libraries maintain a webpage that can be used for this purpose. Gormley and McDermott suggest that the Digital Literacy Observation Survey or something similar be given to students to assess their digital literacy (76). Teachers and the school librarian can then identify needs and next steps in the curriculum to improve students’ digital literacy skills. It is suggested that students could participate in an electronic reading workshop, hosted by the school librarian. Students can read books online, discuss books on a blog, and present books they have read using media (Larson 122). Book trailers, online book reports, and online discussions promoting books are engaging for students and integrate reading and writing. “Thoughtful inclusion of the digital literacies is the only way to effectively help children be prepared for the emerging and increasingly complex literacy demands of the 21st Century” (Gormley and McDermott 78).

This review has explored the collaborative relationship between the school librarian and teachers and the impact on students’ reading levels and comprehension. “When a teacher is
willing to move a learning experience from the classroom to the library media center, good things happen: there are now two teachers instead of one, an information-rich, and technology-rich environment is available, and each learner can expect twice as much professional support” (Champlin and Loertscher 67).
CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSIONS

Educators across the United States continue to search for effective strategies and practices to raise reading proficiency and comprehension levels amongst students. In 2013, only 35% of fourth-grade students and 36% of eighth-grade students were at or above proficient in reading (NAEP). With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, all teachers are held accountable for student learning and the school librarian can be at the center of literacy learning. Collaboration between the school librarian and classroom teachers has a positive influence on reading proficiency and comprehension. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) states, “The school librarian is a leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher and program administrator” (Empowering Learners 536).

Questions that guided this research are: how does collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers impact student reading proficiency and comprehension scores? What system wide practices raise reading proficiency and comprehension levels? What forms of assessment can be used to monitor student progress and guide instruction? As well as, what methods can be used in the library and classroom to raise reading proficiency levels and comprehension?

Benefits of Collaboration

Collaboration is defined as the process of teachers and school librarians working together to plan, teach, and assess learning experiences using standard assessments (Loertscher, “Collaboration and Coteaching” 9). During collaboration teachers and school librarians decide how to implement their lessons, and coteaching has been found to be effective when teaching reading. One of the benefits for students when teachers collaborate in this way is the teacher to student ratio is lowered at the point of instruction (Moreillon, “Reading and the Library
Another benefit is that there are two experts in their fields available to guide students during the learning process.

David Loertscher conducted a study and found that teachers noticed a significant improvement in student scores when teachers collaborated (“Collaboration and Coteaching” 13). Keith Lance found that reading improves when the school librarian is part of the planning and teaching team, he also says reading scores go up when the librarian provides one to one tutoring at the time of need (29). Students can continue learning at home by utilizing the library website, for example, students can review pathfinders that were created by teachers during collaborative sessions to study. Students can access the library blog and connect with other students and the librarian.

The school librarian who feels that he is not involved as a collaborative partner should survey and assess the environment. One technique that could be used is a collaboration log that tracks lessons that were improved due to collaboration (Champlin and Loertscher 67). A checklist could be used to survey the staff as to the effectiveness of the collaborative environment. The school librarian can also ask questions of himself and evaluate the effectiveness of the collaboration. Champlin and Loertscher worked with a school that had a policy that all teachers who wanted to use the library had to first collaborate with the librarian. The school had exciting things happening in the library all of the time (70).

**Systemic Teaching Practices that Impact Reading**

Effective teaching practices, such as, higher level thinking, active engagement in literacy activities, action research, and collaboration in professional learning communities have been documented in this research and shown to improve reading proficiency and comprehension. Taylor et al. identified four dimensions of effective reading strategies that lead to student
engagement; 1) higher level discussions, 2) encouraging independence, 3) using a student support stance, and 4) promoting active participation in literacy activities (5-6). Teachers and librarians in collaboration can foster higher level thinking by asking questions that lead to dialogue between students and teachers.

Collaboration and action research were found to increase student reading scores by 40% in one primary school (Butterfield 319). Each teacher in the building chose a topic related to reading proficiency to research in their classroom. The teachers were held accountable in the monthly review and collaborative sessions to discuss their findings with their colleagues. Raising awareness of individual and whole school perceptions about reading set the stage for change and student reading scores improved (Butterfield 324). The school adopted action research projects into their school development plan, and teachers continue the process now (Butterfield 325).

Another area of effective practice that has been shown to raise reading proficiency and comprehension is collaborating about the teaching behaviors of expert teachers. Topping and Ferguson found that expert teachers exhibit behaviors that increase student reading comprehension, sometimes without awareness. These teachers encourage time on task, a mix of whole and small group activities and guide students by modeling and coaching (140). When teachers collaborate and discuss best practices, they can improve their teaching behaviors and improve reading proficiency and comprehension in their classrooms. Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) have been active across the United States for this type of collaboration. Teachers and librarians in an effective PLC work together to create curriculum, discuss implementation, and develop assessments to monitor student learning (Dufour 28-29).
Assessments Guide Instruction

Collaboratively creating and monitoring student learning using assessment data to guide instruction improves reading proficiency and comprehension. There are different assessments that can be created and used by the school librarian and classroom teacher. There has been a shift in the data collected in the library from measuring the use of the collection to measuring student learning according to Harada and Yoshina (16).

The goal of assessing is to guide instruction and provide support at the time of need. Three types of assessments that meet this goal are conferring with students about reading, teacher formative assessments, and common formative assessments. A three-minute conference with a student can give the librarian or teacher information about next steps and if intervention is needed. Teacher formative assessments, as simple as an exit slip, can be created by individual teachers for their class to check for understanding. The more formal common formative assessment is created by the collaborative team and given to all students in the grade level. The common formative assessment gives the teaching team data to provide intervention or increase the level of challenge in reading activities. Assessing student learning guides instruction and leads to higher student achievement.

Methods Teach Students to be Better Readers

Teaching students how to use questioning strategies before, during, and after reading is an effective method for raising reading proficiency and comprehension. The school librarian and classroom teacher, in collaboration, can model questioning strategies when reading aloud to students. Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas mention many procedures that teachers can use when working with students, such as, “purposeful questioning” (65-66), the Request Method, and a
coding strategy to keep track as they are reading (102). In the Request Method (70), the teacher prepares questions that students would not come up with on their own to get students started on reading the text. The teacher also answers as many questions as the students ask for the first few sentences of the text, and then they discuss what the rest of the text may be about. After the teacher and students work together, the students read the rest of the piece on their own with a purposeful question in mind. This method can be used as a prereading activity to prepare students for meaningful reading (Manzo et al. 70).

Discussions after reading can be used to check for understanding, but discussions may not always be meaningful, and students may get lost in the large group. A few methods that Manzo et al. suggest for post reading comprehension checks are “Inside-Outside Circle”, “Find Someone Who” (135-136), and JigSaw (125). Students work with a partner or small group in each of these methods and have the chance to discuss the readings with each other to gain a better understanding.

QAR, the ‘question-answer relationship, has been found to be an effective method to improve reading proficiency especially when students are working at their instructional level. Teachers and school librarians model how students find answers to questions as they are reading. The answers are either visible in a sentence in the text, found after reading a few sentences or a paragraph, or inferred using background knowledge (Raphael and Pearson 220). The QAR strategy is appropriate for all grades. As students develop comprehension skills using QAR they become better readers of informational text and more likely to be “reading to learn” (Kinniburgh and Shaw 20). This research shows that providing support at the time of need using collaboration, systemic, effective instructional strategies, assessments, and effective teaching
methods raise student reading proficiency and comprehension. The school librarian posited at the center of literacy learning can provide support in all of these areas for teachers and students.
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