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TITLE

**WINDOWS INTO INSTRUCTIONAL
COLLABORATION:
INFORMATION POWER IN THE REAL WORLD**

Shirley Weisman

Hi Willow Research & Publishing

2002

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Hi Willow Research & Publishing
PO Box 720400
San Jose CA 95172-0400
800-873-3043
sales@lmcsource.com - email address
<http://www.lmcsource.com> - web address

ISBN: 0-931510-82-1

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Acknowledgements

Being a member of the California School Library Association Curriculum Committee has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career. Immediately after the publication in 1998 of *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* the committee explored ways to encourage and assist library media teachers in implementing the information literacy standards *Information Power* advocates. Our discussions motivated me to create this book, gave me many of the ideas that I have used in writing it, and, most importantly, gave me the confidence to undertake such a daunting task.

The library media teachers whose interviews and stories are gathered here took time from their already full schedules to welcome me into their library media centers, allow me to tape record extensive interviews, and write stories about collaborations. Their wisdom and dedication inspired me and made writing this book a pleasure.

Zhita Rea, the founder of the Curriculum Committee, has been my mentor since the inception of my career as a library media teacher. She is also one of my most treasured friends. Zhita generously agreed to edit this book. Her suggestions and encouragement have been invaluable to me.

Shirley Ader, another long-time friend, worked with me on creating the instructional designs and gave me a classroom teacher's perspective. Her input is much appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Windows into Instructional Collaborations is a result of the California School Library Association (CSLA) Curriculum Committee's response to *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*. As the committee discussed ways to facilitate the implementation of the information literacy standards delineated in *Information Power* and tie them to curriculum standards, we decided upon the creation of a publication that uses the power of story to:

- demonstrate how library media teachers and classroom teachers, working together, improve student achievement;
- demonstrate that teaching is a risk-taking endeavor that involves learning and growth on the part of library media teachers, classroom teachers, and students;
- demonstrate that knowledgeable dedicated library media and classroom teachers make good things happen no matter what the physical setting or socioeconomic circumstances may be.

Audience

The intended audience for this book is the total education community. Our hope is that library media teachers will use this book as a tool with classroom teachers and with administrators. It is intended to create not only a vision, but also an awareness of a multiplicity of paths that lead to creating the vision. It tells of the failures that lead to successes in the hope that readers will be encouraged to take the risks involved in trying something new.

Need

Library media teachers and library media programs must be seen as integral to student achievement. The information literacy skills that are basic to what library media teachers know and do are the same skills needed by people of all ages in school, on the job, and in their personal lives. The need to publicize and promote the role of library media teachers as educational leaders is made evident in a 1995 study of 77 Missouri high school principals¹ which revealed their general view of the school library media teacher as one who purchases, processes, and circulates books and provides occasional reference services. In this study, many principals did not see library media teachers as valuable participants in the instructional process. Numerous studies since then, however, have shown that library media teacher involvement with the instructional process is, in fact, of enormous importance to student achievement.^{2 3 4} How do we change this limited perception of some administrators?

¹ Dorrell, Larry D. and Lawson, Lonnie. "What Are Principals' Perceptions of the School Library Media Specialist?" NAASP Bulletin (Oct., 1995): 72-80.

² Lance, Keith Curry, Christine Hamilton-Pennell, and Marcia J. Rodney. *Information Empowered: The School Librarian as an Agent of Academic Achievement in Alaska Schools*. Juneau: Alaska State Library, 1999.

³ Lance, Keith Curry, Marcia J. Rodney, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. *Measuring Up to Standards: The Impact of School Library Programs & Information Literacy in Pennsylvania Schools*. Camp Hill, PA: Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries, forthcoming.

⁴ Lance, Keith Curry, Marcia J. Rodney, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. *How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards*. Castle Rock, CO: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2000.

Interviewees

When I contemplated writing this book, I was concerned that all the interviews and stories would be so similar to each other that the book would be uninteresting. Quite the reverse is true. Each person brings his or her unique personality to the job. Each setting is unique. For instance:

- A library media teacher and classroom teachers in a suburban high school notice that student research questions are sometimes vague and group work in the library media center is sometimes inefficient. They notice that, as the use of electronic resources increases, plagiarism increases. The library media teacher takes a leadership role in implementing action research on the integration of information literacy into the curriculum.
- A library media teacher in an urban middle school uses books and her childhood experiences to motivate sixth-grade students to create alphabet books. After sharing several alphabet books, she produces a rubber ball and explains to students that, in her neighborhood, kids did a ball-bouncing game in which each player had to compose a refrain for each letter of the alphabet and recite it while bouncing the ball rhythmically. She demonstrates the game, and the students are hooked.
- A library media teacher in a K-eight parochial school serving primarily well-to-do students implements a cross-curricular study of fables integrating science and literature. Her enthusiasm is contagious. When she reads aloud a fable, the classroom teacher and third graders give their complete attention. When the signal is given to select a fable to analyze, the third graders immediately go to work.

The library media teachers were selected for this book through the recommendations of their peers. Several were interviewed who were, for a variety of reasons, unable to submit their stories and were therefore not included. Unfortunately, the balance of urban and suburban schools which I had planned to include was somewhat affected by the non-respondents. However, my visits to the broad range of schools confirm what I had also observed in my professional career: good things are happening in schools across the socioeconomic spectrum.

The library media teachers profiled in this book are highly motivated people and are all non-stop learners. They are not doing perfect jobs in perfect settings. Like most of us, they try to learn from their mistakes and from the undertakings that don't work or don't work as well as they had hoped. They also learn by reading professional books and journals, by attending conferences, and by sharing information informally with colleagues. They are all willing to take risks, to try out new ideas. They are excited about their successes and learn from their failures.

When I visited these library media teachers, their dedication, their sense of mission, and the depth of their knowledge inspired me. I am profoundly grateful for the time they spent with me and for their stories.

Shirley Weisman, Author