

Valuable Lessons Learned

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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Looking for Lessons

This spring, the editors of *The Medium* distributed an online survey asking for responses to the question, "What do you wish you had known before becoming a teacher-librarian?". We have all learned many valuable lessons throughout our professional career, and by sharing other teacher-librarian's experiences we have an opportunity to learn from each other. Here are the responses from the survey, along with some experiences and ideas from the SSLA Executive:

The Beauty of Book Talks

Tracy Aulie from Prairie Valley School Division uses book talks to motivate her students to read:

"I wish I would have known the power of book talks! It's the best way to get kids reading - sell the book by telling just enough about it to get them interested! There are so many terrific young adult books in my library; I may not read adult books for a long time!"

Save the Stress

Denise Keehborn from Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools has learned to focus on the positive and not stress over the roadblocks:

"I wish I would have learned earlier on that I should not stress so much over the fact that not all teachers will want to work with me, no matter how much I try to engage them."

Online Organizing

Chantelle Anderson from Prince Albert Catholic Schools enjoys the ease of collecting resources online and sharing those sites with her staff:

"I wish I would have known about LiveBinders (<http://livebinders.com>) and Shelfari (www.shelfari.com) earlier in my career. I wasted too much time during staff meetings trying to update staff on new books or online resources I found, and no one was listening anyway! Now - the resources are on the LiveBinder and the books are on the Shelfari - they can check them out on their own...and I'm not the least favourite person in an already long staff meeting!"

Executive Experiences

This list includes suggestions and experiences shared by members of the SSLA executive:

On Technology

1. Create a social bookmarking account for the library, such as Diigo or Delicious. Ensure the account is accessible for all teachers to view the tags (and even for teachers to begin contributing to as they find useful sites).
2. Join Twitter and set up TweetDeck, Hootsuite or other Twitter applications to increase and/or create a Professional Learning Network. Follow #tlchat, @joycevalenza, @buffyjhilton, @gwynethjones, @rmbyrne, @dimac4, @langwitches, and of course, #sasksla.
3. Subscribe to blogs of prolific teacher-librarians, such as Joyce Valenza, Buffy Hamilton, and Gwyneth Jones.

On Collaboration

1. Be a flexible, patient collaborator. Depending on their past relationship with a teacher-librarian or if they have never had a relationship with a teacher-librarian, teachers can feel like you are judging their unit or their teaching. You need to gently advance and just keep offering resources or time to them.
2. Be a great listener; hear what teachers are teaching and inquiring about professionally and curate print and non-print resources to help.
3. INVITE - Invite classes for purposeful, curricular aligned, lessons in the school library.
4. Showcase what you can offer the first day so teachers can plan to use your skills and talents.

On Books

1. Be an avid reader. Collection development cannot slide in the face of exciting new technologies. Your selections are important as the resources will be used by teachers and students to support teaching and learning.
2. Harness collective wisdom. Ask your students to review books for you, to give you recommendations for purchase, and to keep you abreast of new releases. It helps you to maintain a vibrant collection and provides student ownership.
3. Advertise new resources – booktalk, create displays, and upload images to monitors outside the school library.
4. Review - Read juried book reviews, such as CM Magazine and School Library Journal.
5. Locate places to buy high quality materials and buy quality books at the best price - not just from preview boxes.
6. Participate in SYRCA Willows.

On Management

1. Have all professional resources accurately catalogued per subject/class so that the resources are easy to compile for new teachers.
2. Understand how the library budget is organized to support the curriculum. Allocate funds for non-print, interest reading, informational needs, and curricular requirements.
3. Create policy/procedures and detail the tasks required to manage a school library and textbook accounts.

On Professional Development

1. Enroll in the SSLA STF Summer Short Courses to extend your professional learning.
2. Join the SSLA to benefit from the collegiality of job-alike professionals.
3. Read the SSLA's *The Medium* and other province's journals, such as BCTLA's *The Bookmark*.
4. Join the SSLA's Mentorship program
5. Attend the SSLA's professional learning opportunities.
6. Subscribe to journals related to teacher- librarianship such as *Teacher-Librarian*, *Quill and Quire*, *The Horn Book*, *ISTE's Learning and Leading*, and *School Library Journal*
7. Attend the IT Summit to discover ways to effectively integrate technology into the school library.