



A checklist for library success

Does your library's environment it to thrive?
This checklist can help you find out.

by Neil Palabrica

Does your library have a clear vision-mission?

Remember that the main goal of your library is to share information with the students by providing what they need in terms of necessary reference materials. It also acts as a venue where the students can go to study.

Does it have the support of the school board?

A library serves the school and will only be successful if it has strong support from the school organization. Most important would be the support of the school administrator. One way to emphasize this support is to require faculty members to assign homework or projects that would require the students to visit the library.

Are the policies user-friendly?

It is the responsibility of the school administrator to assign a library committee to help the librarian develop effective policies. The committee should represent the students, the parents, and the teachers. Having a committee ensures that the library will reflect the needs of the school, and ensures that the library has clear rules for action. One of the most important rules in the



library would be the system for keeping track of borrowers. Keeping the system simple will make it easy to use and increase the chance that people will follow the rules. The rules should be posted clearly in the library.

Do you have funding?

Due to limited funding, school libraries tend to rely on donations. Unfortunately, the only way to get the books most relevant to the school is to purchase them. You may also need money to buy supplies and maintain the library. Some ideas for raising the necessary funds are solicitations, selling books that can no longer be used in the library, and fines – a very sensitive issue because while this may bring

in money for the library, it may also prevent some people from using it.

Are the materials in the library's accessible?

As the saying goes "The other half of knowledge is knowing where to find it." How you organize the books is not nearly as important as the end result. An organizing system is only successful if it allows you and your library users to find the information you need. Arrange the books first by subject then arrange them by author. Create a listing of materials by shelf to be used as reference both by the librarian and students.

If you have materials other than books such as audio or video tapes, maps, posters, pamphlets, or peri-



Does the library's collection meet the needs of the students?

Develop a "collection policy" that will state the purpose of the library, whom it serves, and the types of materials it collects. Make sure that the library's collection will cater to the academic as well as the recreational needs of the students. The materials inside the library must not only be relevant to the curriculum but should include interesting non-school related books as well.



ATTENTION: All Teacher-Librarians

odicals, you will need to keep them in separate areas so they don't get lost among the books. You can put audio and video tapes on their own shelves. Put up signs around the library indicating where readers can find each subject. You can also assign colors for the subjects. Put a subject label on each shelf. Also put up floor plans around the library that show where the different subjects are.

Do you conduct special activities?

Students who are not accustomed to visiting the library may need to be coaxed. Giving out prizes for the best essay, illustration, or book report is a great way to motivate them. You can choose the book/topic or leave it up to them. You can also give out awards to students who have read the most books, learned the most new words, or written the best report. You can also conduct storytelling activities to a group of students.

Do you have a good librarian?

The librarian is the most important link between the school and the library—the one who will build support for the library. A good librarian must be cheerful and patient when answering questions and enthusiastic about reading. The librarian must be well-organized and pay attention to details. In short, he or she must work well with the students.

Do you conduct regular inventories?

At least once a year, take an inventory. Checking to see if any of the materials listed on the shelf list are missing from the library.

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Your task is to improve your library. Are you up for the challenge? by Vernon R. Totanes

If you don't really have too much time or enough training or resources, here's what you can do to improve your library.

1. Think of yourself as a missionary or evangelist

Missionaries and evangelists often find themselves in an environment where they have to spread the word and convince people about their beliefs. It's probably the same for you as a teacher-librarian. Make it your goal to convince others that the library is important. You need to be a missionary to your principal, co-teachers, students, their parents, and the larger community. Once you've done this (but it may take years!), organizing the library and getting the necessary resources, both human and financial, should be easier.

2. Write your mission statement and make it happen.

Every missionary must have a mission. What kind of library do your students need? Write it down, break it up into realistic objectives, and set deadlines for yourself. Back it up with action plans and cost estimates. This is what you will show those who will help you achieve your mission.

Next, identify the key people who can help you. Present action plans and show them that you are capable of carrying them out. It's not enough to say you want a "world-class library" or a "good library." Potential donors will want to know exactly what your library will be like, why this is appropriate for your school, how much it will cost, and whether you can deliver.

3. Be visible

You have to be the face of the library. Participate in the school's activities. If people see that the teacher-librarian is capable of hosting events, for example, then they might be more willing to believe that you can achieve your mission.

You also need to be ready for the attention. Don't just fix up the library, start fixing yourself up, too. Make sure your image is not that of the stereotypical *masungit* librarian. After all, if the principal and potential donors see that students are afraid to enter the library, they won't be encouraged to be generous.

4. Bring the library to your customers.

Tell your customers—the members of the school community—that the library exists and what services it can offer. Another way of doing this is to work with other teachers. Try to match what they need with what you or the library can provide. Plan for special occasions when they may need your assistance and offer the information they might need even before they ask for help.

All these suggestions can be summarized in two words: be proactive. Teachers are expected to be proactive and to prepare their lessons, to find out what their students need, and to positively respond to them. Teacher-librarians must do the same.

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