

SSLA and #SaskEdChat: The Role of Libraries in a Changing Educational Landscape

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or with librarians with additional duties added to their roles. According to responses, very few school divisions have survived the most recent budget cuts without making some changes to the role of the librarian.

The second question was, *“What are some benefits to having a Teacher-Librarian or Information Media Specialist in the school?”* One participant described the role as “someone who represents literacy in the physical building.” Another participant shared the benefit to having a librarian in their school as “a wealth of info to find resources,” adding that their librarian takes copies of teachers’ year plans and pulls relevant resources before the unit begins. Another benefit shared by a participant was having an “expert in digital citizenship” in the school. Despite the cuts to librarian roles, there is still much that the librarian offers in the school community.

The question *“What can be done to make the library a learning hub in the school?”* had a wider variety of responses, ranging from those relating to the physical space to answers that focused on the actions of the librarian. In terms of space, participants suggested the use of different collaborative workspaces, ‘zones’ of different volumes, and the presence of a maker space. Other participants focused on what could be done by the librarian. One participant cited “continued modelling of a love of reading” as a factor in creating a learning hub for students. Most responses referred to making students feel welcome by encouraging curiosity.

Next, participants discussed answers to the question *“How does a Teacher-Librarian or Information Media Specialist affect learning outcomes for students?”* Some participants noted that a librarian’s support of inquiry projects was a direct way of affecting a range of cross-curricular learning outcomes. Others noted that literacy and reading events helped students reach English Language Arts outcomes. One of the more common responses was the providing of physical and digital resources to assist with a variety of curriculum units. To this end, one participant described librarians as “curriculum specialists.” Librarians support teachers and thereby support student outcomes.

The fifth question asked, *“How does a Teacher-Librarian or Information Media Specialist affect school culture?”* One participant responded by describing the library as a space that “embraces diversity and does not judge students on what they want to read or how they choose to study. Everyone is welcome.” Another participant described the ways in which a librarian is “an important support for continuous learning for

teachers.” Others focused on the modelling aspect of the role, noting how literacy incentives provided by librarians often provide opportunities for readers to connect with one another.

When asked *“What is the value of collaboration between Teachers and Teacher-Librarians or Information Media Specialists?”* many participants noted that collaboration is key in 21st century classrooms and that the librarian is a sought-after collaborator. One participant placed the value of collaboration as *“incalculable,”* noting that the success of students comes from literacy skills, which are dependent on librarians. Another noted that librarians help teachers find materials for increasingly diverse and highly populated classrooms. These responses tie directly to the question that followed, which asked *“How are libraries and Teacher-Librarians or Information Media Specialists supporters of collaboration and innovation?”* One response noted that libraries must have the physical space to allow students to collaborate with one another. Another item of importance cited was the need for librarians to stay up-to-date with educational technology.

Lastly, participants engaged in a discussion of the challenges faced by libraries and Teacher-Librarians or Information Media Specialists. Many participants noted that maintaining relevance can be a challenge in a world where most people think of libraries as paper-only places. Others noted that librarians must be constantly updating their skill set and knowledgebase in order to be effective. Perhaps most importantly, participants also recognized that librarians need to advocate for themselves in order to save the role of the school librarian.

This library-centered Twitter discussion provided education professionals with an opportunity to connect and focus on the successes and challenges of librarians today. Many participants were educational leaders using their voices to advocate for the role of school librarian. Teachers noted that the success of their students is affected by the presence of a librarian. In times where divisions must choose whether to maintain the role of a Teacher-Librarian, it is clear that 21st century skills are often developed in the library, through inquiry, collaboration and innovation.