

## *Partners in Achievement: Libraries and Students (P.A.L.S)*

### *Improving student achievement through data use for library media specialists*

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Research indicates the school library program has a positive impact on student achievement. As stated in the document Facts at a Glance... Student Achievement and the School Library Media Program,

*School Library Systems (SLS) and School Library Media Centers (SLMC) collaborate with the educational community to:*

- \*strengthen instructional practices,
- \*enable students and staff to access, evaluate, synthesize and interpret information,
- \*implement NYS Learning Standards and National Information Literacy Standards,
- \*foster literature appreciation,
- \*engage students in the learning process through use of varied resources,
- \*enhance access to quality print/electronic information resources through interlibrary loan and online databases, and
- \*strengthen connections to the real world through teaching inquiry, research process and problem solving.(3)

These findings are supported in the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES School Library System (SLS) region. The SLS is a state funded program that provides vision and leadership, support for teaching and learning through resource sharing, and professional development opportunities, thereby supporting student achievement.

Annually, the library media specialists complete an online survey providing feedback on the SLS services and programs. One open-ended question relates to a goal they have for their program and another asks how the SLS can support them in reaching this goal. Over the years, the following goals have consistently been listed: collaboration, flexible scheduling, collection development, instructional design and professional development.

Considering these goals and the studies on the impact of school libraries on student achievement, by listening to the strengths and needs of our member districts, and the SLS's role in providing vision and leadership, the question to consider became...

***“How can the SLS address supporting the above goals in a broad context that includes accountability of student performance as measured on standardized assessments that is customized for the school library environment? ”***

This may sound like a stretch, but consider this NCLB quote “School library media centers can contribute

to improved student achievement by providing instructional materials aligned to the curriculum; by collaborating with teachers, administrators and parents; and by extending their hours of operation beyond the school day.”(NCLB The Achiever, 9/15/04)

With this research in mind, the PALS model attempts to apply global research to the local level. In 2005-2006 the PALS process and model was developed as a pilot. The collaborative efforts within BOCES departments, school district administration, and library media specialists were pivotal in this initiative.

P.A.L.S. was designed to address the challenge to improve library instruction in information literacy skills and strategies, and library collections, by linking to identified student learning needs on ELA assessments. Guidelines and strategies for analyzing student work and skills required for collaborative dialogue were developed. The resulting identification of student needs was applied to collection development, and library instruction and lessons designed in collaboration with classroom teacher instruction in information literacy skills. We were honored to be the recipient of the *AASL 2006 Highsmith Research Grant Award*. This allowed the 11 participants to create a two-year action plan over the 2006 summer (three days).

Training addressed key areas of: NYS Assessments, Data Analysis and Collection Development. The assessment training addressed the nature and format of the NYS assessment program, with emphasis on ELA 5-8 and library and information skills in core content areas. Topics included: question samples and consideration of the information literacy skills identified and addressed; overview of grade 3-8 tests, and the new ELA 3-8 Core Curriculum.

The data analysis sessions focused on the types of reports available and the applicability of data analysis programs such as COGNOS and Data Mentor. Collection development emphasis included collection analysis reports and library instruction. On-site coaching and consulting was available to each participant, focusing on both data use and collection development and instruction. These visits were essential for bringing together the various informational resources and beginning the initial stages of the development of the action plan.

The project's intention was to assist library media specialists in their educational function, not to add to their workload (even though we know it does). An overview of the roles for the project was shared with all parties to understand the commitment necessary to make this pilot project work.

School Library System: Provide training and consultation in library-media center collection development, information literacy skills and instructional strategies as it relates to student assessment data. In-district coaching and consulting for participants.

OCM BOCES School Quality Services: Provide training for participants in NYS assessments, curriculum, data analysis tools and skills and instructional strategies. In-district coaching and consulting for participants.

Regional Information Center: Provide access to test reports, COGNOS and other data resources, updates on trends in data systems and grant writing consultation.

Library Media Specialist: Attend workshops, complete tasks between workshops, develop and implement plans for next steps in collection development and library instruction (action plan).

District Administration: Provide logistical support for LMS participants and financial commitment. Substitutes, scheduling modifications, or additional help in the library-media center may be necessary to provide time for workshop attendance as well as for the work involved in the project.

There have been so many positive results in each of the eight districts that participated. That would be another article. We needed to draw upon the expertise of several BOCES departments, but in particular, Peter McCarthy from School Quality Services, who does most of the data analysis training and consultation and Mary Tiedemann, LMS from our own department. And of course the library media specialists within the OCM SLS region who are active in their own level of advocacy. Their efforts and willingness to trust and take reasonable risks are why the PALS pilot has been extended another year (2006-07) and a new PALS Tier 2 group was formed (16 LMS with teacher partners). This pilot has become a service for our members. I feel honored to have the opportunity to work with such talent!

*For further information:*

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