

School and Public Library Collaboration

• **Keep 'em Reading** •

by | Joanne M. Moore and Lisa M. Shaia

Grades
K-2, 3-5

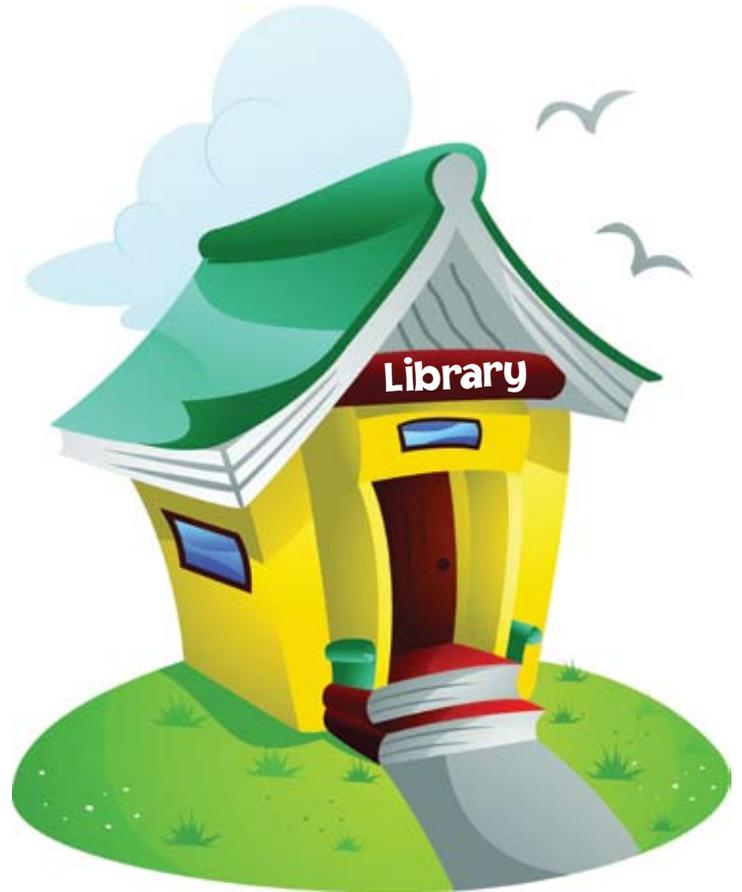
Whether you work in rural town where only one children's librarian and one elementary media specialist exist, or a busy city where there are large library departments, you can collaborate to improve student learning and professional development. These ideas will get you going for the school year and continuing that forward momentum all through the summer!

School Year Collaborations

Pre-K Outreach

In order to provide a comprehensive school-public library collaboration, preschool outreach can be added to introduce preschoolers to the library. Many media specialist's schedules are filled with K-5 classes and teacher duties, providing limited time for preschool support. The public children's librarian can offer a special once-a-month storytime to help supplement the curriculum and prepare students for library time.

In the beginning of the school year, write a letter or e-mail to the preschool teacher offering your storytime services. (Or, conversely, if you are a public preschool teacher, write a letter to your public children's librarian asking if he or she would like to volunteer his or her services.) Suggest a time table of days and times that work best for you around your in-house program schedule. Set up a schedule for the entire school year. Ask about coordinating monthly themes so the storytimes really connect with students. Work these themes into your storytimes so you're not doing extra work. Bring a set of crafts to leave with the preschoolers that match the theme. Students can bring home a reminder of your visit to share with their parents.



At the end of the school year, write a letter to parents encouraging them to attend your summer storytimes. Attach a library card application and let families know about the benefits of the library and the summer reading program.

Kindergarten Social Event

In August, have a special event for incoming kindergarteners. Hold it at the public library and advertise that it is being co-hosted by the elementary library. Read stories such as Natasha Wing's *The Night Before Kindergarten*, Alice B. McGinty's *Eliza's Kindergarten Surprise*, or a choice from Joseph Slate's Miss Bindergarten series. Sing a song such as Dr. Jean's "The First 12 Days of School," use puppets with Carole Peterson's "There's a Dog in School," or sing together with Lenny Hort's *The Seals on the Bus*.

While the children are working on a craft, use the time to mingle with parents. Let them know what your expectations are for the beginning of the year and what their children will learn during their library class throughout the kindergarten school year. This is also a great time to plug fall/winter public library programs and to invite parent volunteers into the school library. Provide flyers of after-school programs, or photocopy a schedule on the backside of the craft.

Library Cards for Online Database Use

When the curriculum gets more research-heavy for upper-elementary students, join forces to utilize online databases. Send home public library card applications and make it a mandatory homework assignment to get parent signatures. The media specialist can share student rosters with the public librarian, who can compile the student's public library card numbers. No longer can students "forget" their library card to get out of an assignment! Armed with a public library card number, students can now be taught about online dissemination while using valuable resources.

Searching the Library Catalog, Grades K-3

Elementary students love to use computers. In fact, they are eager to use any form of technology. Introduce the library layout and organization through instruction about the automated card catalog. Explain the use of the classification system, and its myriad benefits to organization. Encourage students to independently search the card catalog for assignments and to pursue personal interests.

Once students understand the card catalog operations internally, demonstrate "safe searches" through a "visit" to your public library. During the instructional day, expand their knowledge base of public and virtual libraries through card catalog instruction and navigation. Incorporate Internet safety lessons, and develop a link off your school library or district's web site for easy access to additional reliable and available resources.

School Book Fairs

Book Fairs can be an exciting time for students, parents and volunteer organizations. They can serve as fundraisers and, in communities with no retail, book fairs can bring a "book store" to

your school. Careful planning and procedures will assure success. During the Spring School Book Fair, organize an evening event. Invite community organizations, such as the public library, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Historical Society, the YM/YWCA, Girl Scout and Boy Scout camps, sports clubs, and other non-profit organizations to set up displays for their summer activities. Parents appreciate the opportunity to sign up for their children's summer activities all at once. Serve as the community ambassador for families, so that they can all enjoy summer activities and fill the community programs.

Cable TV Storytime

Children enjoy bedtime stories. Parents appreciate them, too. Local cable companies are an excellent resource for expanded community outreach. Put it all together and develop a collaborative storytime cable show with the school media specialist and the public children's librarian. Invite guests and local celebrities. Advertise your program through the schools and the public library. You'll soon be a local celebrity yourself!

Booktalking Your Way through the Secondary Grades

Don't stop collaborating just because the students have entered middle and high school! Keep up the good work and get creative about it. The public librarian might offer monthly booktalks in schools to promote the public library's collection. Use new fiction as a hook to get kids' attention. School libraries may not be able to afford new popular fiction in this economy. Or, offer monthly visits where you bring a themed collection. For example, in February bring a variety of fiction and nonfiction written by African American writers. Circulate the books right out of the classroom.

Summer Collaborations

Summer Reading Promotion

Invite your public library's children's librarian into the school, and share instruction in grade level lessons that model professional collaboration and promote the public library summer programs. Choose themes from some of the final instructional themes for the school year, and work

together to develop a craft activity that students may keep. Send home public library summer program flyers and watch the programs fill!

Summer Reading Book Sharing Program

If your school library has multiple copies of books from the summer reading list, why not make them available to students through the public library? A book sharing program is an innovative idea to allow as many students as possible to get the materials they need. This is also a great way to increase circulation during the summer months.

Before the summer reading program begins, have all media specialists drop off all available copies from their summer reading lists at the public library. The public librarian can put in temporary barcodes and decorate with a special color sticker on the spine. Use a neon color and write the grade number on the sticker so students and parents won't have to refer to the summer lists. Keep the collection in a special place. You can replace your new book section with summer reading books, or use the tops of a bookshelf to display the copies.

Restrict the circulation to resident patrons only (students from other towns can be directed to their local library) for ease of tracking. Have a fourteen-day loan period and block renewals to make sure the most number of students will have access to the materials.

When school begins, collect the summer reading books to deliver to the schools. Take off the special stickers and delete the temporary barcodes from your collection.

Make a Splash Theme

Create bookmarks with each class to promote the Collaborative Summer Library summer reading program. Here are some ideas that work with this year's theme, "Make a Splash":

Pre-K-K: Bubbles

K: The Three Little Fish and the Big Bad Shark

Grade 1: Boat

Grade 2: Pirate

Grade 3: Dolphin

Grade 4: Whale

Grade 5: Beach bucket (for beach reads)

❖ ❖ ❖

Joanne M. Moore, is the Center Elementary School media specialist and school library program coordinator for the Litchfield, Connecticut public schools. Lisa M. Shaia is the children's librarian at Oliver Wolcott Library in Litchfield, Connecticut. Joanne and Lisa have been collaborating since 2005.

Suggestions for a Year of Collaboration

May: Discuss ways to promote summer reading program

June: Share instruction to promote summer reading program

July: Enjoy your summer off (or your summer reading program)

August: Discuss collaboration for the school year, and host a Kindergarten Social

September: Promote after school programs

October: Join forces for Open House night

November: Plan a holiday storytime together

December: Host a holiday storytime

January: Brainstorm ideas for School Vacation week

February: Plan the spring Book Fair

March: Host Book Fair

April: Tape Cable TV Storytime

