Urban School Librarians

Working to change the lives of children one day at a time!

District of Columbia Public Schools
Library Media Services
February 25, 2011
DC Public Schools

• The System
  – 125 schools, 80% Title I, 80% FARMs,
  – 46,000 students, 85% African American
  – No systemic school library culture

• The Beliefs
  – Core Beliefs

• The Challenges
  – Education – 3,700 truants in 1st semester
  – Funding – furloughs and budget deficits
  – Library collections neglected

• Urban school librarians work everyday to affect change in this environment
Reluctant Principal
Marla McGuire
With a reluctant principal...

- **Goals**
  - Reading programs
  - Create partnerships with learning community

- **Obstacles**
  - No budget and resistance to change

- **Achievements**
  - Book clubs
  - Reading events
  - Moving toward best practices
Programming Challenges and the Overarching Goal

Challenges:

- Lack of buy-in from faculty, students and administrators
- A marginal role in the context of the school – academically
  – socially

Goal:

Create a library PROGRAM that addresses the social and academic needs of the stakeholders while upholding the three core tenets of the school’s mission statement: rigor, relevance, and social justice.
The Plan and Overall Outcome

The Programmed Events:

- **Rigor** – workshops for students and faculty—i.e. Research Resources, Academic Honesty, Citations, Scaffolding Research
- **Relevance** – extracurricular activities that extended student’s knowledge into the real world—Book Club, Poetry Club, Debate Team, FBLA
- **Social Justice** – create opportunities for students to connect with a diverse community through partnerships and events—i.e. 826, DCCAAH, Busboys & Poets, PEN/Faulkner Writers in Schools Program

The Outcome:

The library has become a hub of intellectual and creative activity with content-aligned workshops, 4 extra curricular activities, and weekly events.

“What the library has been to me;
As the soil holds the roots of a tree,
A background, a stronghold, a neutrality.”

–Francisco Fitch-Flores, Grade 12
Reading Advocacy

Renee Goods
Michelle Williams
Partnerships
- Francis Gregory Public Library
- Collaborated on “author program” for students with Ms. Allen

Support
- Teachers
- Parents/chaperones
- Administration
- SLMS – school coordinator for logistics and student preparation

Partnerships
- “Studenttreasures Publishing Project” (free publishing program for students)
- Writing club for students (Kindergarten–sixth grade)

Support
- Teachers, students, parents, and administration
The Process

- Resistance
  - Scheduling issues, time constraints

- Unexpected Outcome
  - Enhanced students’ reading interest
  - Exposure to multiple formats
  - Increased parent participation

- Change
  - Increased interest in library activities
  - Increased exposure to various format of literature

- Resistance
  - Lack of motivation, time constraints

- Unexpected outcome
  - Motivated parents
  - Build relationships
  - Parents Reactions

- Change
  - Respect for books
  - Meet the published authors (Family Literacy Night)
Instruction

Christine Stoessel
Denea Bruce
Instruction: Teacher collaboration

**The Challenge**

- Low-performing students, large percentage of ELLs
- School has not met AYP
- Teachers feel their jobs are on the line if progress is not made
- Teachers want students to read on their reading levels in order to show measured progress
- Conflict for the librarian; freedom of choice

**The Solution**

- Level the fiction (chapter) books
- Students check out one book on their level, other books as they wish, allowing for serendipity

**The Unanticipated Benefit**

- Teachers can send students to the library with a specific target
- Students feel a great sense of accomplishment when they advance reading levels
Paradigm Shift

From “information specialist” to “school librarian.”

• From “babysitter” to valued member of the educational community.

• From trainer to teacher.

• From “special(s) subject” to ancillary curriculum support and collaborative instruction.
Library Instruction

“It is [no longer] sufficient for the librarian to ‘train’ students in the use of library resources. [Librarians] must now have a real understanding of the pedagogy of teaching” (Margaret Feetham as cited in Dale, Penny, Matt Holland & Marian Matthews, 2006).

- Knowledge of learning standards (to understand how these standards can enhance and coordinate with classroom instruction)

- Assessment Cycle:
  - Pre-assess → Instruction → Post-assess → Standard

- Plan and teach standards-based lessons that adhere to best practices for teaching and learning.
Partnerships

Martha Bradshaw
Sue Bloom
Our Unique Role as Change Agents

- unique role as independent and diplomatic change agents
- we can bring different parties to the table

My Story...

- only by sharing ideas & resources did we win a grant to:
  - renew our children’s gardening program and
  - bring healthful cooking to the classroom curriculum
  - share our best practices and learn from each other
Presenters
IMLS Laura Bush Grant Participants
DC Public School Librarians

- Carolyn McCallister
- Marla McGuire
  Cleveland ES
- Sarah Elwell
  Columbia Heights EC
- Renee Goods
  Winston EC
- Michelle Williams
  Ferebee–Hope ES
- Christine Stoessel
  Powell ES
- Denea Bruce
  Stoddert ES
- Martha Bradshaw
  Eastern HS
- Sue Bloom
  Peabody
Change Agents in an Urban School District