Advocacy Plan

Introduction

In order to meet the needs of students, school libraries have moved beyond the position of storing and maintaining books. Today's librarians must advocate their positions, their collections, their skills and services, and much more in order to ensure students have what they need to be successful 21st Century learners. Effective advocacy builds support from "decision makers who affect the quality of the school library program" (AASL, 2009, pg. 41).   The following advocacy plan was designed for the Southeast Middle School Library.

The School

Southeast Guilford Middle School, abbreviated SEMS, is located next to Southeast Guilford High School on Woody Mill Road in Greensboro. SEMS is currently the second largest Middle School in Guilford County due to its current average daily membership of 1,010 students (SEMS, homepage).

SEMS has a mission to "challenge students to use their minds well, providing them with the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and support they need to meet rigorous academic standards. Students can achieve their full potential in academic, creative, personal, physical, and moral development. We are responsive to students'

developmental needs, engaging them in independent inquiry, reflective thinking,

cooperative learning, and informed decision-making. They learn to understand

important concepts, develop essential skills, and apply what they learn to real-world

problems. Our students are encouraged to be 21st century learners, good decision

makers, and contributing participants in our society." (SEMS, information).

The School Culture

In a previous interview, the school library media specialist, Betsy Crone,

described the school as "largely rural where many of the children's parents also

attended," indicating that Southeast Middle School has a strong and lasting community.

Southeast Middle is considered a joint campus with Southeast High School. Recently,

both schools underwent a much needed renovation. SEMS was not only renovated, but

also was expanded. A new media center, auxiliary gym, and administrative offices were

added to the school. The old media center was renovated into four 21st Century

learning classrooms. The current school year began with only residual follow-up items

to be done from the construction and renovations.

The Faculty

SEMS at present has approximately 70 highly qualified teachers on staff. Of

these 70 teachers, 53 are female and 17 are male. (SEMS 2010-2011 Staff

Organizational Chart.) Only 15% of SEMS teachers have less than four years of

experience. Almost half, 48%, of the teachers at SEMS have ten or more years of experience (NCDPI, 2011, NC Report Card-SEMS).   Additionally, turnover is also low at SEMS, averaging at four percent. (NCDPI, 2011, NC Report Card-SEMS).
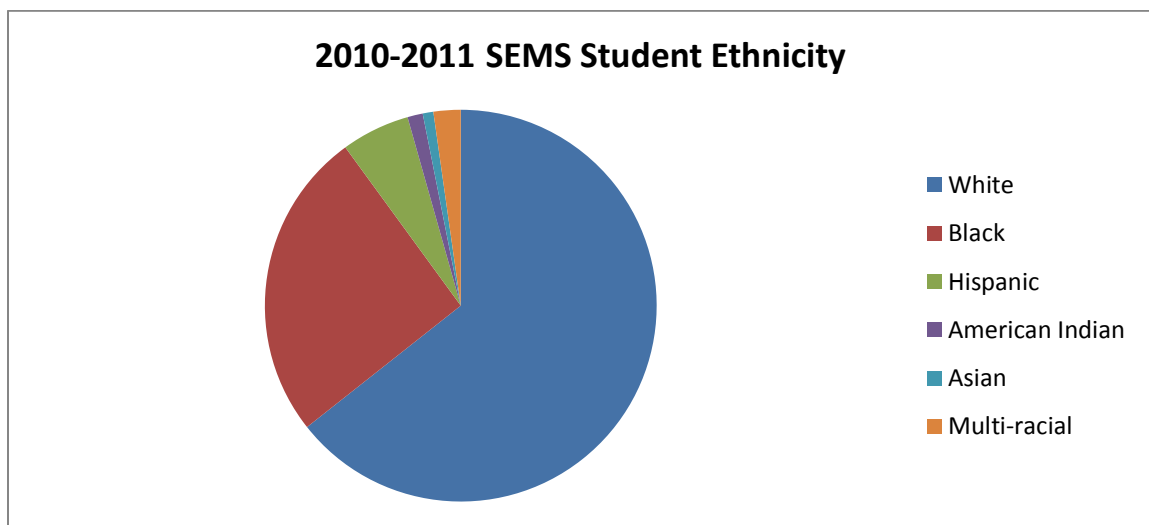
The Library

The school's librarian, Betsy Crone, is among those with more than ten years of experience. She has also been in her current position for eight years. The library assistant has also been at SEMS for over 10 years in her current position. They service a program with a print collection of over 14,000 items in a new 4,670 square foot facility. In support of the school's vision and mission, the library adopted its mission statement which is "to teach students and staff to be effective users of information as well as to encourage and prepare students to be life-long readers and learners." (Wotring, 2011). Currently, the library is open for approximately an hour before school and thirty minutes after school. The library program hosts the Battle of the Books Club and a monthly Book Club.

With limited funding due to the student population not being economically disadvantaged, the library works diligently to develop a relevant and meaningful collection. Technology is a weakness of the school and the library program; however, many of the long-term teachers are not advocates of technology in instruction.

The Student Population

The students at SEMS are a uniquely diverse group. At present, SEMS has just over 1,000 students. The following chart shows the student body make-up as reported by the *NC School Report Card.*

2010-2011 SEMS Student Ethnicity

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- American Indian
- Asian
- Multi-racial

Although students at Southeast Middle School are predominantly white, the students at SEMS are a uniquely diverse group. The following chart further breaks down the same student population in terms of gender, socio-economic distinction, and disadvantaged student representations (NC REPORT CARD):

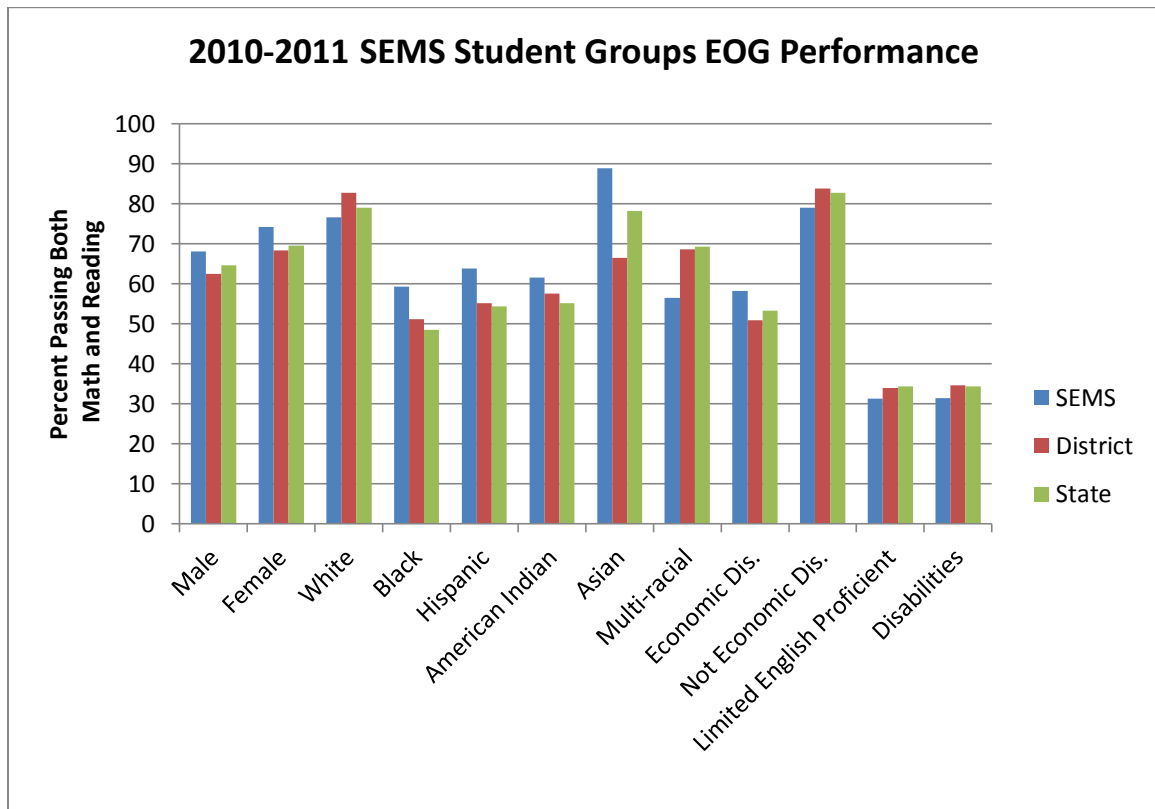**2010-2011 Student Groups Percentage Chart**
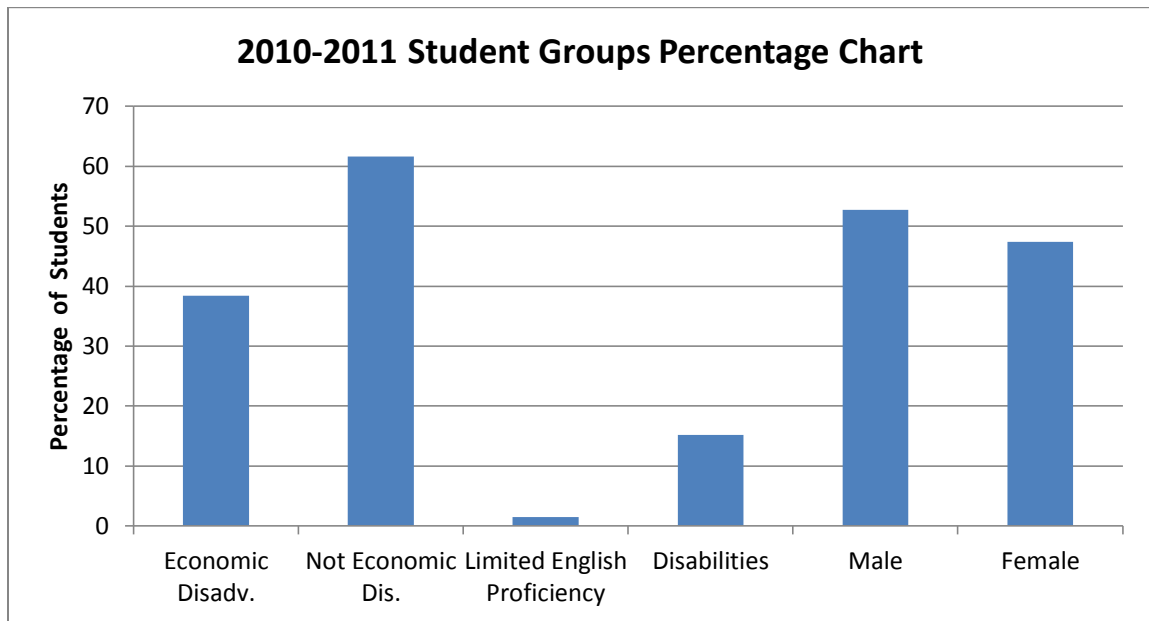
Just over a third (38.4%) of the students at SEMS are economically

disadvantaged. Likewise, less than a quarter of the students (16.23%) have disabilities

or have limited English proficiency.

During the 2010-2011 school year, SEMS students performed well as a whole on

the North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) Performance evaluations. The following chart

shows the percentage of students passing at or above grade level per test and subject.

2010-2011 SEMS Student EOG Performance
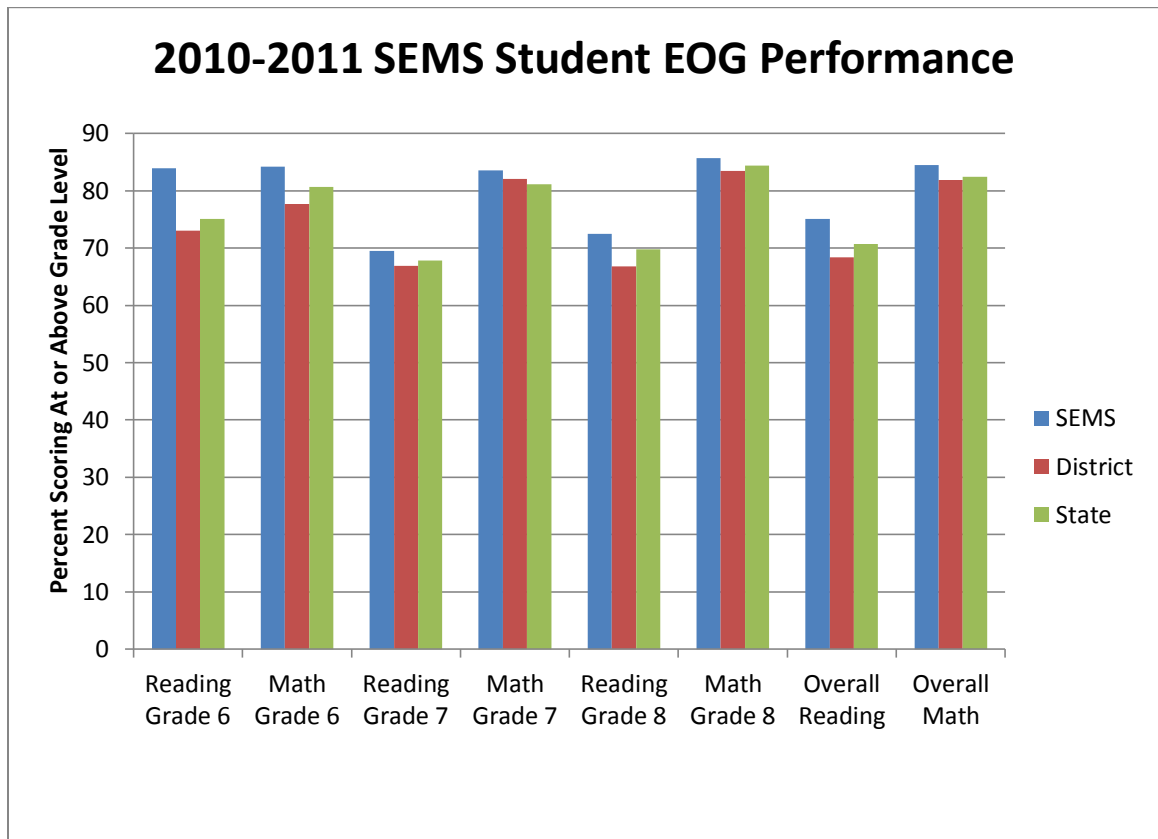
At each grade level, SEMS students scored above the district and state on both the Reading EOG and the Math EOG (NCDPI, 2011, SEMS). Likewise, the school as a whole also scored above the district and state on both the Reading and Math EOGs.

The following chart indicates the combined math and reading performance of each student group represented at Southeast Middle School for the same End-of-Grade testing.

2010-2011 SEMS Student Groups EOG Performance

A bar chart titled "2010-2011 SEMS Student Groups EOG Performance" with the y-axis labeled "Percent Passing Both Math and Reading" ranging from 0 to 100. The x-axis shows student groups: Male, Female, White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Multi-racial, Economic Dis., Not Economic Dis., Limited English Proficient, Disabilities. Each group has three bars: SEMS (blue), District (red), State (green).

Five of the twelve groups did not score above the district or state for the combined math and reading EOG tests. However, only three of those five groups had a percentage of the students passing below a 70%. This results in SEMS being ranked a "school of progress, with expected growth" (NCDPI, 2011, SEMS).

Although SEMS appears to be doing well overall, it is clear that there are some areas in which student achievement needs to be addressed.

Public Relations Goals and Objectives

Despite the closeness of the Southeast Middle School community and the overall academic achievement of its students, the SEMS library must advocate and promote public relations within the school and the community at large. An effective advocacy plan, based on the school's mission to provide students with the support they need to "meet rigorous academic standards" as well as "achieve their full potential in academic, creative, personal, physical, and moral development," assures the quality of the school library program will continue to meet the needs of the students. The following goals, objectives, and activities to meet the goals and objectives, have been established as the Southeast Middle School Library Advocacy Plan.

GOAL 1: Teachers will understand the library has a valuable role in support of curriculum.

Objective 1: The school librarian will collaborate with one additional teacher in each grade during the school year.

Activity: Teacher Collaboration

To collaborate with one additional teacher in each grade during the school year, the librarian must be proactive. She must familiarize herself with the materials covered in the standard

course of study for each subject at each grade level. She must

also initiate collaboration with teachers. Not only must the

librarian initiate collaboration with teachers who have not

participated in collaboration before, she must also initiate

collaboration with teachers who have. Engaging veteran

teachers who are familiar with how collaboration works will not

only promote new collaboration efforts but also continue

recurring projects, both activities keep collaboration active and

relevant for student learning. Additionally, engaging veteran

teachers in continued collaboration encourages them to

communicate the benefits of collaboration to other teachers,

leading to further promote collaboration. Simple emails as well

as giving a 5-minute library update during staff meetings will

communicate to teachers the benefits of collaboration and

encourage teachers to participate in future collaboration.

Proactive action on the part of the librarian such as inviting

teachers to collaborate may also need to take place. In so doing,

examples of collaborations that may be of benefit to the

individual teacher may also be provided. Records must be kept

pertaining to which teachers participated in collaboration, when

the collaboration took place, what the subject/project entailed,

and what means of evaluation were used.

Objective 2: The library program will increase teacher knowledge of instructional services and resources available through the library by providing informational activities (workshops, power points, etc.) each month.

Activity: Monthly instructional/informational workshops

In order to perform this activity, the librarian must begin with asking the principal for the permission to hold such meetings. A calendar needs to be determined. Although, ideally, the same day and time each month would be most convenient for the librarian; this may not be the case for the staff. A more flexible or varied schedule may need to be executed. Workshop topics must also be discussed and agreed upon. Emails and fliers would need to be sent out to staff each month announcing the workshop topic, date, and time. Sign-up may be needed to have adequate materials available. Attendance of who participated each month is a method of evaluating the success and relevance of this activity. Additionally, providing the information on the library's website, if at all possible, with a website visitor tracker, will also provide evaluation of usefulness. Teachers who may not be able to attend can still utilize the information and be counted.

Goal 2: New teachers to SEMS will recognize the relationship the library has on

enhancing student learning and achievement.

Objective 1: The librarian will collaborate with at least one new teacher during

the school year.

Activity: New Teacher Collaboration Workshop

Hosting a workshop to educate new teachers on the how-to's

and benefits of librarian-teacher collaboration is an activity to

increase new teachers usage of collaboration, as many new

teachers are unknowledgeable of the library's services and/or the

librarian's role in instruction. A date and time for such a

workshop will need to be arranged. Announcements and

invitations to the workshop would need to be sent out.   The

workshop agenda should include examples of collaborative

activities, an actual collaboration demonstration performed with

the librarian and another teacher demonstration. Also, as part of

the workshop, appointment scheduling for follow-up or

collaboration meetings should take place. Attendance records

along with the appointments made during the workshop will

provide means of evaluating the success of the workshop. As

the librarian is able to follow-up and answer questions or proceed

with collaboration, new teachers will grow more at ease with collaborating with the librarian.

Objective 2: All new teachers will visit the library for three activities during their first year at SEMS.

Activity: Library Orientations for New Staff

Library tours and orientations for new staff members should be held before the first day of school when new teachers are learning about the school. Another time to hold them is individually when new teachers join the staff during the school year. Not only will the new staff members learn how to use the library themselves, but they will also be provided useful information pertaining to what the library has to offer them in terms of resources. These resources include items that support their area of the curriculum as well as services the librarian can perform to assist the teacher in instruction. These one-on-one or small group orientations provide the librarian with an opportunity to personally meet new teachers and introduce them to the media center.

Activity: Staff Meeting with Library Focus

In addition to the library orientation, another activity would be for the librarian to ask the principal to hold at least one staff meeting during the year in the library in which the librarian has an opportunity to address the entire staff and discuss the library program as part of the staff meeting. It would be best if this took place later in the year if most or all of the staff participate in a new school year library orientation. This activity would not only refresh everyone's mind to the library's resources and services, but would also provide a time to highlight new items and features.

Goal 3: Students will value the library for purposes of reading for pleasure.

Objective 1: Increase student usage of fiction material by 3% over last year's usage.

Activity: Book-Talks

Increased student reading for pleasure has been proven to increase academic success. (Krashen, 2004). During class visits to the library each quarter, the librarian can hold book talks promoting fictional materials she deems as appropriate to

encourage reading. Classes currently are on a fixed schedule

for circulation. The librarian would need to let the classroom

teachers know when she will be holding the book talks so the

teachers can encourage class participation. The librarian must

have read all the books she plans on talking to students about.

Additionally, she must be able to discuss different books with

different classes. Knowledge of the student interest as well as

knowledge of the collection are both of high regard. Circulation

records each month will indicate the success of the book-talks.

Overall circulation records as well as the individual circulation

records of the books highlighted in the book-talk will show if an

increase in usage has taken place.

Activity: Book Marks

      Another activity that she can perform during the book talks is

to have bookmarks available with different focuses. For

example, if the librarian book talks *The Hunger Games*, it would

be helpful to have bookmarks available that highlighted "If you

liked The Hunger Games, try: *The Maze Runner* (Dashner),

Unwind (Shusterman), *Feed* (Anderson), *The Tomorrow Code*

(Falkner), *The Eleventh Plague* (Hirsch), or *Epic* (Kostick).

Students can also make similar bookmarks based on their tastes

in books. With so many titles being recommended in so many

categories, overall circulation statistics may be the best means of evaluating the success of promotional reading.

Activity: Student-created Promotional Videos

Another activity that can be used to promote reading to increase student usage of fiction material is to run weekly student-reviewed and created promotional videos which highlight books read by students on the announcement screen. Library assistant students have created these every year as a project using Animoto. This project may be opened to any student wishing to use their creativity to create a promotional video about a book they liked. The library is often responsible for the announcement screen information and these short videos could be easily incorporated in with other announcements. Circulation records for the books promoted can be used and compared to last year's records as a method of evaluation.

Objective 2: Increase student check-out of magazines by 3% over last year's usage.

Activity: Magazine display

As new magazines are received, older magazines are available for student check-out. To increase magazine check-

out, a display near the magazine rack reminding students they can check out older magazines will increase magazine circulations. Display materials including teacher and/or student READ posters can be utilized. Currently, the library has several celebrities on promotional READ posters. Creating promotional READ posters with favorite teachers, administration, and/or students reading magazines will promote magazine circulation. Circulation statistics compared to last year's circulation records will be the evaluation method.

Goal 4: Students will value the library as a support of their curricular needs.

Objective 1: Increase student usage of non-fiction material by 3% over last year's usage.

As North Carolina moves into the new Common Core Standards for curriculum, students will need to increase their expository reading. Many of the activities to increase student usage from Goal 3 certainly apply here. The librarian can collaborate with teachers to do genre and non-fiction book talks that correspond with upcoming or current assignments. The librarian would have to be proactive in contacting the teachers and know what the genre for the month is as well as engage in the collaboration. Book-talks can be given on non-fiction subjects that

correspond with assignments. (Recent assignments and collaborations included biographies, creating a travel brochure, and upcoming science fair projects.) Collaboration activities would need evaluation means as part of the assignment. Circulation statistics can be specific as with what books were used in the book-talks or general to cover non-fiction as a whole and compared to last year's statistics.

Objective 2:   Increase student usage of technology on classroom projects by 15% over last year's usage.

Activity: Demonstration of Technology Use

Now that Southeast Middle School has three computer labs, increasing usage of technology is limited only to teacher preference in assignments. To increase student use of technology, the librarian must engage teachers in using technology on assignments. To do so, the librarian must first demonstrate technology usage when she is collaborating, presenting to students or staff, and as often as possible in order to encourage teacher usage. The librarian may also invite teachers to utilize the computer labs for student projects. Evaluation of this activity is limited. Observation of increased teacher technology usage is subjective. However, one method that could be used is the sign-up log for teachers using computer labs for classroom assignments and projects. The number of

hours logged for the month or year compared to last year's hours will indicate an increase or decrease in computer usage of students at school.

Activity: Collaboration Using Online Resources

Engaging in collaboration with teachers doing research to use online resources is an excellent way to increase student use of technology. A detailed example is provided.

PHASE ONE – Planning

The first part of this activity is the planning. The librarian must initiate collaboration by extending an invitation to collaborate with a teacher. This can be done via email or in person where the librarian makes an offer to teach a lesson on NC WiseOwl. It is best that the activity is planned when best to assist in a unit involving research writing.

After a teacher agrees to collaborate, the next step in planning is to schedule an appointment with teacher to collaborate on the NC WiseOwl lesson. A simple email asking the teacher when it would most benefit her lesson plans to accommodate your involvement is all that is necessary.

At the planning meeting with the teacher, details are worked out as to who will be responsible for which components of the collaboration. In this situation, the teacher will set project details (length of assignment, due date, grading criteria, project agenda, etc.) and teach research writing.

The Librarian will instruct students on library resources including non-fiction, reference, and online resources. The librarian will also be available for assistance during lab time when students are doing research.

At this time, the teacher schedules her class for library time for the collaborative lesson and class time the following day for student research.

PHASE TWO: Implementation

During Phase Two, the teacher begins her unit on research writing. The teacher and librarian communicate back and forth with updates on the assignment details and about other relevant information to build a strong unit for the students. On the day scheduled, the Librarian performs the collaborative lesson with the 6th grade Language Arts class in the library. She has prepared a formal lesson plan, a power point presentation, and handouts. (See Appendix A, B, C, and D). On that particular day, it is pre-arranged that the library assistant works with other classes coming in for checkouts.   The librarian teaches the lesson on online resources. Handouts are provided that include notes as well as WiseOwl instructions.

The next day, during the same class time, the class visits the computer lab adjoining the library. The librarian makes herself available by casually walking around the room providing assistance as needed as students research online. Being connected to the library allows students to utilize both print and online resources.

PHASE THREE: Evaluation

At the completion of the research writing unit, the teacher and librarian

meet to discuss the effectiveness of the online resources using WiseOwl

lesson was on the assignment. It is ultimately the teacher who makes this

decision. She has included online research tools and citation as part of

her grading rubric. Evaluating the effectiveness of this activity in terms of

advocacy is not as easy as tallying the circulation of books. There is no

means for actual data collection. The teacher and librarian visually

observing students using the online resources correctly during the lab time

is as close as they can come. However, working with a teacher to teach

an important research skill to students has lasting effects. Students will

have the skill to utilize in future projects. A relationship with the teacher is

established in which the teacher sees the resources available in the library

in which students can use technology for their academic achievement. A

good working relationship with a teacher will advance the library's

advocacy through continued collaboration.

Overall Plan Evaluation

Many parts of the Overall Advocacy Plan can be evaluated with reliable data.

Accurate records involving collaboration with teachers will answer many of the

questions related to several of the advocacy activities involving Goals 1, 2, and 4.

Likewise, accurate records involving circulation will indicate if advocacy Goal 3 was met. Additionally, for some activities such as the workshops in Goal 1, orientations in Goal 2, and computer lab usage in Goal 4, attendance is an indicator usable for evaluating whether the goal was met.

As with each advocacy activity, the librarian should make notes detailing the activity, whether it met the goal/objective for advocacy, and who was involved. This information will help determine if such an activity should be implemented again as a future means to advocacy endeavors. At the end of the year, the librarian should gather all information pertaining to each goal and examine the effectiveness of the activities performed in meeting goal objectives. In so doing, a new or adjusted advocacy plan for the upcoming year can be instituted.

Conclusion

Ultimately, any activity the librarian can do to increase the use and visibility of the library, advocacy can take place. Although the ideal situation is for the staff, teachers, and students to be vocal about the many benefits the library brings to student achievement, it is the behind-the-scenes activities the librarian performs that draws recognition to the program and develops lasting advocacy.

Bibliography

Crone, Betsy. (2010, October 25). Interviewed for LIS 615 assignment.

Krashen, Stephen. (2004). The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research. 2nd
        Edition. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). (2011). "Southeast Guilford
        Middle School 2010-2011." *NC School Report Cards*.   Retrieved October 27,
        2011 from http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?pYear=2010-
        2011&pLEACode=410&pSchCode=550

SEMS School Website. Retrieved November 18, 2011, from
        http://schoolcenter.gcsnc.com/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sec
        tiondetailid=37763&

Wotring, Dee. (2011). "Southeast Middle School Library Mission Statement."

Appendix

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix D