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May 15 2013 15:07

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The Public Library Connection

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Publication info: School Library Journal 58. 12 (Dec 2012): 20.

[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract: While public and school libraries differ, their common patron base of children gives both groups fertile ground for growing ever stronger collaborative bonds. The key shifts of the literacy Common Core Standards provide a strong starting point for the dialog.

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Full text: The Public Library Connection The new standards require that public and school librarians pull together Now, more than ever before, collaboration between public and school librarians is critical. As we strive to be at the center of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in our schools, strong relationships with our local public librarians can make all the difference in the world and provide us, our students, and our school colleagues with tremendous advantages. While public and school libraries differ, our common patron base of children gives both groups fertile ground for growing ever stronger collaborative bonds. The extent to which school libraries can contribute to the creation of life-long public library patrons should not be underestimated. Nor should we ever underestimate the extent to which public librarians can reinforce and support our work and our kids' learning well beyond the school day. Pulling together The more people are directly and deliberately involved in the implementation of the CCSS, the more likely it is that it will succeed. All too often, however, collaboration between different types of libraries is too passive. Largely, public librarians have "picked up" where school librarians "leave off." After school hours and during vacations, we "hand-off" our students to the public libraries. While this arrangement has met with varying degrees of success (based largely on the disparate efforts of individual public and school librarians), the Common Core demands a more seamless and systematic integration of services to youth. As with anything pertaining to these new standards, heavy lifting must be done. If we are committed to having our students succeed in achieving the Common Core, school librarians must help public library colleagues get up to speed on the new standards. We should share with them the changes we are facing, and brainstorm how that may impact their work directly. Ideally, they will not discover the CCSS by accident or on the fly--when one of our students is standing in front of them asking for help. Only proactive and consistent communication will lead to success. Where to begin The key shifts of the literacy Common Core Standards provide a strong starting point for the dialog (see table). Envisioning how these shifts may impact and be supported by the work of public librarians will help them be better prepared for what our students and colleagues will surely need from them. It will also foster a more seamless learning experience across library environments. AuthorAffiliation Olga M. Nesi, a former school librarian, is a library coordinator for the New York City School Library System, NYC Department of Education's Office of Library Services. To submit an On Common Core opinion piece, please contact Rebecca T. Miller at rmiller@mediasourceinc.com.

Subject: Academic libraries; Academic standards; Librarians

Location: United States--US

Classification: 8306: Schools and educational services; 5200: Communications & information management; 9190: United States; 9000: Short article

Publication title: School Library Journal

Volume: 58

Issue: 12

Pages: 20

Publication year: 2012

Publication date: Dec 2012

Year: 2012

Section: Features

Publisher: Media Source

Place of publication: New York

Country of publication: United States

Publication subject: Publishing And Book Trade, Education, Library And Information Sciences

ISSN: 03628930

Source type: Trade Journals

Language of publication: English

Document type: News

ProQuest document ID: 1223845458

Document URL: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1223845458?accountid=44871>

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Last updated: 2013-04-30

Database: ProQuest Discovery, ProQuest Research Library

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