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A Site-Level Library Power Case Study of Lincoln, Nebraska: Educational Excellence on the Plains

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This summary of events and impressions from the case study of the Lincoln (Nebraska) Public Schools site examines the major elements present in the community and the educational context prior to and during implementation of the Library Power initiative. A description is provided of the key team members who secured the grant, the educational framework in place to support the initiative, and the new teams and strategies developed to ensure effective implementation of the project. The impact of Library Power not only led to accomplishing the basic objectives, but also resulted in new areas of collaboration among educators and the community beyond pre-award expectations. The Lincoln site possesses a history of educators committed to excellence in the district through longevity of service, caution in adoption of innovation, and systematic planning and evaluation for professional development intended to engage all who might participate.

Introduction

General perceptions an outsider will embrace quickly while visiting Lincoln for a short time are that the people are industrious, courteous, stable, enduring, and respectful of each other and the land. Patience and a willingness to work together are especially evident in the teachers and administrators of the Lincoln Public Schools (LPS). Education is a high priority. Parents and teachers take pride in contributing to excellence in education. Libraries, the universities, churches, community businesses, local media, parks and recreation, and museums are managed with programs and services intended to support the local schools. This Mid-Western state capital city was ripe for an initiative such as Library Power. The dynamics of combining the goals of Library Power with the established local educational base have led to impressive results.

School libraries have been renovated. Library collections have been revitalized. Librarians have, in many schools, become leaders in information literacy skill instruction. Established as a strong component of the district's central curriculum divisions prior to Library Power, the Lincoln Public Schools Library Media Services unit increased its role in collaborative professional development, multicultural and multidisciplinary curriculum support, and cooperative efforts with the local community library system.

Methodology

The process for gathering information for the Lincoln site case study followed the guidelines established by the Library Power evaluation team. From 1995 to 1997, over 400 documents including copies of memos, newsletters, promotional materials, information skill guides, Library Power annual reports, facility plans, and collection maps were examined. Personal interviews were conducted during three four-day visits in Lincoln that involved nearly 80 hours total in conversations with 38 individuals from the local Library Power staff, the Lincoln Public School district administrators, supervisors and consultants, the LPS Foundation leaders, and selected building level principals, teachers, and parents. The case study researcher also attended over a dozen meetings in which Library Power was a central topic, including gatherings of all LPS school library personnel, the LPS Foundation, local school Library Power Advisory group meetings, and meetings of the LPS Board of Education.

Content of the documents and interviews was analyzed to identify factors that supported the successful implementation and possible institutionalization of Library Power. Primary indicators included commitment to professional development, vision and leadership of the local Library Power team, involvement of the greater Lincoln community, and tangible plans to extend successful practices beyond the grant years. This summary is the result of two previous and more extensive reports on the Lincoln site. Each document was subject to review and reflection by the principal participants in Lincoln to validate both qualitative and quantitative data.

Context

The Lincoln Public School Foundation, the local education fund, was established in 1989. Local education funds are tax-exempt, nonprofit, community-based organizations that work to build community support for high-quality public K-12 education. The goals of the Foundation are:

- to build more grant opportunities for family involvement and children's learning;
- to build additional innovative grants for classroom teachers and staff;
- to build bridges for school and community partnerships.

In cooperation with the LPS Director of Library Media Services, the Foundation sponsored the application leading to DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest funding for Library Power. Already involved in support of several local initiatives, the LPS Foundation found that the Library Power project could evolve from a limited target of library renewal to an orchestrated process for instructional collaboration among teachers and librarians.

With a history of limited risk-taking, the LPS, in its traditional approach, accepted the challenge of Library Power in the context of its already established system for good education. Together, the Foundation Executive Director and the District Director for Library Media Services fashioned a team to

implement the principles of Library Power. Their choices, drawn from the Lincoln community and selected from within the district-level offices, proved to be critical in moving each school's library program forward. The District Director of Library Media Services noted during the third year of Library Power:

The original proposal was rather narrow and formal and limited to just community partnerships which had already been created ... The result, however, has been an expansion and acceptance of the principles of Library Power across all 51 schools in the district; an increase in building-level planning and implementation of flexible scheduling, not something forced on them ... and more local contacts with the community We were just into a district-supported effort to extensively weed and invest new dollars in up-dating materials and the Library Power project allowed us to accelerate that effort dramatically.

The successful implementation and extension of the Library Power project at Lincoln resulted from constructive team efforts to capitalize on a firm organization in place prior to the grant award and to use the initiative to consciously improve services in a systematic manner. This effort can be seen in extensions of established baseline measures, collaboration to involve and reach a broader audience, and coordination of local resources and staff across the district. The intention was to achieve a coherence of the initiative with the established foundation of excellence so that continued success beyond the initial project could be highly probable.

In a school district that practices local building governance to a large degree, shared ownership of the initiative was of major importance. Although general principles for implementation were defined centrally and guided by the expectations issued through Library Power, local adaptations were honored and the larger group ultimately grew stronger from observation of different approaches.

The Library Power Team

The Established District Team

Human resources and attitudes committed to change may be the most powerful element necessary to successful implementation and adoption of initiatives. The central Lincoln team was composed of three professionals in established positions prior to the implementation of Library Power.

- A district Director of Library Media Services seasoned in building-level experience, aware of previous and current efforts to improve library services, an integral player of equal rank with other district curriculum consultants, who understands the broader application of the LPS Foundation goals to the services she supervises;
- A Coordinator of Library Media Services who understands professional development programming, has experience in service at the local building level library operations in Lincoln, and who had the ability to

focus the initiative on the larger instructional role of school librarians rather than the limited role of materials renewal only.

Renewal is used here to mean updating and targeting library collections, and under the Lincoln Library Power initiative, such renewal became an impetus for instructional collaboration and planning not widely practiced in the district prior to the grant. In addition, the Coordinator of Library Media Services was instrumental in establishing a cadre of librarian and teacher teams that served to further professional development at building, district, and even state levels. Activities and instructional resources, based on emerging strategies for information literacy, were gathered in a district handbook, *Guide to Integrated Information Literacy Skills*.

According to the Coordinator for Library Media Services,

The overall strength of our staff development component is our site-based-plan development. Although there were certain basic themes and objectives from the Library Power project, each school created their own plan based on the results of the Library Power assessment that was conducted with their staff.

Lincoln Public Schools normally provides for four professional development days annually for all professional staff. Inservice programs for Library Power were extended beyond this norm and included summer months. Many teachers and librarians were involved in more than a dozen full-day or half-day professional retooling sessions each year of the project.

- A Foundation Executive Director who was key in originating the Library Power proposal and implemented the goals of the LPS Foundation in support of building learning environments rich in use of multiple resources for student study and creative leisure or recreational activities.

The Executive Director saw the value in team-teaching efforts involving the librarian as co-planner and co-teacher early in the project. Multiple resources and collaborative instruction soon became criteria used to select other educational efforts created by teachers and financially supported by the Foundation.

Creating the Library Power Implementation Team

Selecting individuals who possessed both the technical and public relations skills to implement the Library Power project was a fundamental decision that had to be made soon after the grant award. Defining roles as well as the identification and recruitment of these players gave the project the right mixture for extending the vision as well as implementing the practical steps to accomplish the goals.

Engaging building-level administrators, teachers, and librarians in over 50 schools was a formidable task. Due consideration was given to resources and time frames, and the approach selected was to implement the project over three phases. One third of the schools were brought on board each year. This allowed for manageable portions for implementation. The first schools

had the opportunity to grow and extend across several years under grant funding, whereas later schools came on board and learned from preceding operational successes and failures. While tangible steps in collection renewal and facility renovation were placed on the three-phase plan, professional development to establish awareness of overall principles for practice was immediately opened to all schools and their staffs.

The complexities of the project could best be managed by a team composed of individuals knowledgeable about the human abilities and resources across the district and also able to focus on specific needs at local buildings. Support to address those individual needs would require staff members who would spend time at buildings to guide and assist the librarian in weeding, collection mapping, lesson design, facility renovation planning, and public relations with local principal and staff.

The new positions added for the Library Power implementation team with corresponding clerical support for bookkeeping and correspondence included the Library Power Project Director and the Library Power Project Field Library Media Specialist. The Library Power Project Director was an experienced educator with 15 years of successful teaching in Lincoln schools, who had held special assignments with the University of Nebraska and had a wide array of local community and government contacts. The Director was also known for her outgoing personality, intelligence, political savvy, and a constant sense of humor. The Director possessed no specific library skill training, which lack may have aided this player in the enhancement of a wider vision for the initiative: educational reform, not just library reform.

The Library Power Project Field Library Media Specialist was added to the team to help the school librarians with demands that are more complex than most teachers and other community members realize. As an on-site liaison, the Field Librarian spent several weeks at each building to assist in application of the principles for book weeding and collection mapping. The physical presence of this additional librarian helped to reassure local building administrators, teachers, and the building librarian that removal of outdated books could be accomplished in a thoughtful and systematic manner.

Extending the Team Across the District

The Lincoln Public Schools have experienced district-level administrative personnel. Most have 10 or more years of service in the district. Most are grounded in teaching experiences in the district, and several continue to serve in building-level instructional roles in addition to their district-wide consulting responsibilities. This experience base, including a stable commitment to the district specifically and the Lincoln community in general, is reflective of the structure already in place to support an initiative such as Library Power.

The LPS Superintendent has served as the chief administrator since 1988. Aware of the evolution of library services in schools since the 1970s, the Superintendent emphasized that

The best sign of a strong library media program is high student use and the Library Power project has sparked the move to the next level, a level where librarians have the flexibility, resources, and facility to be instructional team members.

The Associate Superintendent for Instruction encouraged principals to shift more dollars to the purchase of library materials, and the result was an increase to just over \$8.00 per student on average in 1994 for library books, more than double the \$3.50 allocated in 1991. The Associate Superintendent's instructional philosophy is centered on student demonstration of critical thinking skills. She values highly the process for determining relevance and authority of information in whatever format it might be found and presented. In order to increase information resources to enhance the critical thinking process, the Associate Superintendent promoted the district's commitment of an additional \$600,000 to new library book acquisitions over a four-year plan, and encouraged district-level consultants in reading, social studies, and English also to commit a portion of their budgets to purchase new library books.

The LPS Director of Staff Development worked closely with the Director of Library Media Services and the Coordinator of Library Media Services in planning inservice experiences. Although support at the highest administrative levels was generally in place at the time of the Library Power award, attitudes and awareness of the project's potential varied among the subject area consultants who served as directors of curriculum at the district level. Professional development for district-level leaders became as important as professional development at the building level. Tangible activities in reading promotion and collaborative teacher and librarian instruction had to be demonstrated in the first two years of the project before support at the mid-administrative levels began to grow.

The Staff Development Director identified and clustered the mission, goals, and major themes for the professional development efforts related to Library Power. They included resource-based education, team teaching, cooperative selection of materials, evaluation of student performance, and acceptance of the librarian in a more extensive teaching role. With flexible scheduling, new resources, and new facilities in place, the librarian was to be seen as more than just another special teacher available to provide release time for reading activities isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Individual buildings and principals were at different levels of progress along this collaborative continuum. The Staff Development Director's office determined the unique needs or potential barriers in each building. Given a general framework for what might be desired outcomes in the long run, local teachers could select the approach most suited to them. In cases where similarities

were identified, inservice might be combined for several buildings in order to make the best use of resources, facilities, and personnel for programming.

The Director of Staff Development summarized the impact of the Library Power in-service efforts as

A model for future staff development in that teachers and principals understand that an area of the curriculum can be given depth and emphasis The Library Power project has given validity to an accepted practice of collaborative teaching in the district, and most important, it has convinced many principals that should they need to interview future applicants for the position of school librarian they will involve their teachers in those interviews and expect to find evidence that the applicants desire a strong role in co-planning and co-instruction ... Over the three phases of this project, we have learned from our early mistakes and have made certain that more grassroots decision-making takes place before we move a program to the building level. This has been especially true in getting a better idea as to what the local building level teachers want in terms of staff development and who might be willing to lead the programming.

The LPS Evaluation Specialist coordinates local district assessments on a systematic basis and established several consistent measures as annual benchmarks. Her experience and skills proved to be valuable in development and application of instruments to measure teacher and principal perceptions of collaborative teaching. Focus groups were also used to determine what school librarians saw as the value of Library Power and what means they recommended to keep the project's initiatives and principles in place after the funding ended. The Evaluation Specialist had a sound knowledge of school library services before she became involved in the Library Power project.

The LPS Facilities Supervisor is in charge of the Drafting Department and monitors the compliance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. He and his staff, in cooperation with general maintenance services, are responsible for all new facilities and planning for modification of existing facilities. The Facilities Supervisor was directly involved with the facilities renovation portion of the Library Power project so that changes in library facilities could be coordinated with any other physical changes that might be necessary.

Building-level Library Power Advisory Groups worked through the initial planning stages to identify a dream list of facility changes. From the narrative descriptions compiled by the Phase I schools, the Facilities Supervisor determined common needs and planned projects and construction schedules so that similar actions could be taken at several schools. Special needs could be isolated so that a concentrated effort could be made to meet the individual school facility problem. The goal of the clustering was to make the grant money cover as much facility renovation as possible and at the same time more than match the Library Power grant dollars so that the renovations would have a lasting impact and improvement on the school. In

some schools, renovation meant that the library facility became accessible for students with a physical disability for the first time, and in other cases, because renovation activities for basic Library Power changes would disrupt the facility for several months, the project was expanded to clean and paint additional areas at the district's expense. There was always an attempt to use labor efficiently.

Common furniture and shelving needs were also identified so that dollars would go further with bulk ordering. Much of the shelving was constructed in district shops so that units were custom-made to meet the need for flexible programming. One popular choice was sturdy shelving on casters so that the shelving units could be moved to create different spaces in the library for large-group or small-group instruction, or could actually be used to transport resources to a classroom for extended use. For every dollar from Library Power for furniture and renovation, LPS invested four.

Extending the Team Across the Community

Cooperation between the Lincoln Public Schools and Lincoln City (public) Library prior to Library Power was fairly typical, with shared author visits and summer reading programs. Areas in need of more cooperative effort were also typical, with much more communication needed on the possibility of a joint online public access catalog, and greater effort to alert all parties who might be affected by teacher assignments demanding more resources than those available at either school or public libraries. The Coordinator of Youth & Adult Services at the public library became a key team player in the early stages of Library Power, and her successor (position changed to Coordinator of Youth Services) was also key in continuing discussions and plans for cooperative programming beyond the grant period.

In general, public librarians weed their book collections much more aggressively than do their school library counterparts. School library book collections have aged greatly since the 1960s, and many have not been weeded because of lack of funds for new books, fear of dropping below some fixed standard level, or the fear that weeding would be seen as destroying valuable school property. Collection renewal was an area in which building librarians needed a great deal of support and assurance. The critical role played early in the Library Power project by the public library Youth & Adult Services Coordinator was to move the weeding along in an efficient but aggressive manner. Her efforts meant that for every one book identified by the school librarian for removal, at least three more would be removed because they were out of date or worn beyond cost-efficient repair. Coupled with the principles of collection mapping to rebuild collections in direct relation and depth to the curriculum, collection renewal became a collaborative activity between librarians and teachers. Steps were taken prior to the actual weeding of books to express the reasons for and potential of the collection renewal process. Through the Building Advisory Groups, sessions

were held with teachers and parents to explain the need to update and revitalize the collections.

Lincoln community members, specifically members of the LPS Foundation, of the various Parent and Teacher Associations, and some LPS Board members, became part of the Library Power team through committees. In addition to the Community Lincoln Library Power Advisory Committee, subcommittees were established for public relations, awards and grants, and volunteer coordination. These groups established contacts with the local media to publicize and participate in special author visits, book readings and discussion events, and the recognition of student achievements due to Library Power initiatives. They organized awareness and promotion of the project through banners on school buses, schedules and coming events printed on place mats for pizza parlors, and video programming to promote information skills. One such videotape by teachers and students focused on defining information literacy in clear terms.

Supporting Local Teams at Individual Schools

Each building established a Library Power Advisory Group composed of the school librarian and parent and teacher representatives. Each Advisory Group was involved as either a planning unit or reaction panel for all local Library Power efforts, including discussions on facility renovations, collection mapping, and new instructional units based on increased use of multiple resources. These groups provided for open discussion of the initiative, and comparison with efforts at other schools, and often provided communication to other parents in addition to the news about Library Power through the school's newsletter.

Principals at the Lincoln Public Schools operate on locally based site management. They have a great deal of power in budget allocations and determining the composition of their teaching staff, including special teachers outside of the classroom. Flexible scheduling to allow for more planning time between librarian and teacher as well as blocks of time for extensive thematic research projects rather than just a brief story-reading visit was implemented and generally accepted by each principal. Some elementary schools in Lincoln were on flexible schedules for many years prior to Library Power, but the initiative brought all schools into this scheduling pattern. In addition, in order to build a professional support team at the building library, many principals allocated the additional dollars or points granted to their school for Library Power to hire more clerical assistance for the full-time librarian.

Impact of Library Power

The Lincoln site provided an exemplary model to give tangible representation of the national vision and new expectations for public elementary and middle school library programs. Over the three years of the project, each of the multiple roles of the school librarian as teacher, information specialist,

and learning facilitator was strengthened. There was a dramatic increase in the frequency and degree of collaboration among classroom teachers, school librarians, administrators, and community groups to improve the teaching process district-wide. Partnerships in school buildings, among district consultants, and between the school district and community were created and strengthened for lasting impact.

New Collections Stimulate New Collaborations

The weeding project and the collaborative collection mapping to identify new materials for 13 of the Phase I Lincoln schools resulted in several changes from the baseline data reported the year prior to the Library Power grant award. The changes in average age and focus for the book collections that took place over a three-year process included many occasions when teachers and librarians found that the agenda for cooperative lesson planning was driven both by new materials now owned and through selecting additional materials to be acquired. The collection drove the possibilities and the excitement for future lessons.

Data gathered in 1996 show the impact of Library Power efforts. The average copyright date for multivolume print encyclopedias moved from 1982 to 1991 at elementary schools, and from 1985 to 1992 at middle schools. Average copyright date for applied science titles moved from 1977 to 1986 at elementary schools, and from 1975 to 1982 at middle schools. Average copyright date for geography titles moved from 1976 to 1985 at elementary schools, and from 1970 to 1974 at middle schools. Each Phase I school reported an increase in circulation and dramatic increase in thematic instruction and team teaching involving the librarian. Data available during the 1997 case study observation visit indicated that the average copyright date for the general book collections was moved forward eight years, with several elementary schools improving the recency of the average copyright date by 15 years. In other words, in some elementary schools prior to Library Power in Lincoln, most of the nonfiction books were over 25 years old. By the end of the grant period, most of the nonfiction materials provided content no older than 10 years. The Phase II schools also reported higher circulation figures and a greater willingness of teachers to use library resources in support of the curriculum.

The 1997 measures indicated that the average update in the copyright for specifically targeted areas of the collections was 11 years. In selected areas of the collection that match high resource demand areas of the curriculum, the recency of the information improved dramatically. This seemed to be especially true for such targets as multicultural studies, biology, and ecology.

In addition, targeted areas showed growth in quantity. A limited pool of resources, which allowed for only one title per pupil, became an enriched and diverse collection providing each student, on average, with half a dozen or so titles for comparison and contrast. An abundance of inviting, relevant

materials with verbal and visual information usually less than five years old was available to students. The Social Studies Consultant approved an allotment of \$5.00 per student for library books related to social studies from the 1996 special investment of \$55.00 per student for revision of social studies materials across the district. This major investment is the result of the regular seven year review of the social studies curriculum. District-wide reviews of discipline areas such as science and language arts were scheduled for future years.

More Frequent Collaborative Teaching

Five themes were emphasized in the continuing professional development efforts. These general themes were Implementation Strategies, Interdisciplinary Support, Collaborative Planning, Community Connections, and Library Facilities. From these themes, dozens of more specific topics were identified to meet specific building-level needs. Specific development sessions took into account the level of local Library Power implementation, the level of local librarian and teacher perceptions of the principles guiding the initiative, and the stage of development for renewal and mapping of collections and facility renovation. During the 1995 fall semester alone, 49 different inservice meetings were conducted across the district. Most of these were planned and led by a growing collaborative cadre of librarian and classroom teacher teams.

Under the direction of the LPS Evaluation Specialist, baseline measures were taken to determine perceptions of the potential role of the school librarian. Increments were established to match the Loertscher Taxonomy, generally accepted as a basic standard in the school library field nationally. This taxonomy plots the range of school librarian involvement in the information teaching process and the creation of curriculum from 0 as "no contact with other teachers and no response to the instructional demands in the school" to 11 for "extensive curricular development with leadership coming from the school librarian" (Loertscher, 1988, pp. 11-14).

Measures taken of school librarians and classroom teachers prior to implementation of the professional development session related to Library Power indicated that most teachers operated at only Level 3 or below. This was an indication that the most frequent expectation for use of the school library resources was "to borrow a few materials from the library from time to time, but to not engage the librarian in instructional planning or other teaching activities." Expectations for use of multiple resources was low, and school librarians across the district were not viewed as professionals in the full range of teaching roles including lesson planning, learning activity implementation, information skill integration in the lesson, evaluation of student performance, revision of the lesson, and considerations for extending the information skills into other areas of the curriculum.

The teachers of the 14 Phase I schools were asked to respond to the taxonomy again 18 months after implementation of the Library Power project for those schools. For just over one year, these teachers had experienced flexible scheduling to allow for more in-depth planning and team implementation of multiple resource support, collaborative planning to engage the librarian as a co-developer of activities, renovation of library facilities, and a dramatic development of the library book collection. Most of the teachers at Phase I schools had moved to at least Level 6, at which the librarian was consulted as a professional who had ideas to contribute to learning activities and whose expertise in use of library materials of good quality could be integrated into the enrichment of specific thematic units of study.

Over one third of the teachers moved toward more interactive planning and teaching with the librarian as a partner. The library collection, now more closely mapped to target specific curricular expectations and to give depth in support of varied student abilities, had become essential to the successful implementation of the instructional activities. The collection could now meet the demands of a full class of 30-40 students. Multiple copies of key resources could be made available to meet immediate information and reading needs. Depth provided a variety of materials to increase the opportunity to compare and contrast facts and opinions, and to report observations and experiences. The resource-based, classroom-integrated lesson objectives were moving toward application of critical thinking skills. Students and teachers had an expanding opportunity to demonstrate that they were effective users of information for academic, personal, and recreational needs.

More recent data from April 1997 indicated continued movement up the taxonomy to increased collaborative partnerships and a stronger instructional role for the librarian. Across all schools in the district, as the three phases were now all operational, more teachers perceived their role with the librarian to be at Levels 6 and 7. Educators from the classroom and the library were working together to enrich thematic units previously either not possible or limited to basic encyclopaedic resources.

In 1994, under 2% of the teachers and librarians viewed themselves as creators of new curriculum. Three years later, nearly 20% believed that they were working at the highest levels of the Loertscher Taxonomy, creating new lessons for an expanding information literacy curriculum because of the new supply of resources and a commitment to manage time for planning and evaluation. The movement up the taxonomy occurred across all schools regardless of administration or grade levels. Library Power in Lincoln was viewed locally as the initiative that had established this impact on the instructional planning process.

Prior to receiving the Library Power grant, only 8 of 32 elementary school librarians indicated service on curriculum committees. Data gathered in March 1996 indicated 24 of 36 served on such committees. In April 1997, 33

of 42 served on curriculum committees. There is greater acceptance by classroom teachers of the librarian/s curriculum development role as well as a greater willingness on the part of school librarians to seek such a role.

In some schools, the collaborative possibilities may have reached a natural limit. Planning times were consumed, and some library calendars revealed that all space and time for new thematic unit activities was booked for the next three months. Even with the influx of new materials, flexible scheduling, and higher partnerships expectations, one full-time school librarian is likely to be able to engage in/ at most, 20-30% of the classroom teaching. Although clerical assistance and volunteers at some buildings may help this percentage of teacher collaboration to increase, the Lincoln project shows signs of needing greater numbers of professional library staff, certainly beyond the national average of one librarian for approximately 900 students or 50 teachers (Chaney, 1998). Lincoln may be on the verge of experiencing an Information Age phenomenon. As teachers and librarians collaborate to learn and teach information literacy, both grow in information expertise. New teams of individuals with multiple information skills may form.

Integrated Information Literacy

Perhaps the strongest component of the LPS staff development effort was the application of key higher-order skills for problem-solving and for the adoption and enhancement of innovation. Cautious and nearly instinctively sensitive to valuing a grassroots approach to consider building level needs and demands, the district Library Power team practiced what eventually became their own integrated approach to information literacy skills. The professional development plans included analysis of needs, synthesis of solutions, and evaluation of application. This approach, coupled with the practical understanding that, "if you give a child a fish you feed him for a day, but teach the child to fish and you feed him and others for a lifetime/" led to the acceptance of definitions of information skills outlined by dozens of outside experts, and moved the development and promotion of these skills into the hands of a local cadre of 12 librarians and other teachers. Local teams developed and extended their expertise to concrete examples of lessons and activities that could be adopted across the district.

In 1996, this cadre of 12 teachers and librarians developed over 40 sessions for other educators in the district. Emphasis was on teaching information skills through exercises for accessing and using information. By 1997/ this core group had expanded, and a collection of ideas, activities, and resources had become a consolidated *Guide to Integrated Information Literacy Skills*. Duplicated through district library support, the guide became a key curricular document across all schools, grade levels, and subject areas. Nearly 500 copies have been provided to educators at state and national conferences.

Based on a fundamental belief in supporting student growth in reading skills through access to a wide variety and large number of books and other materials, the guide is a compilation of successful activities tested in environments where classroom and library are instructionally integrated to enhance the power of reading and critical consideration of what is read. This guide, a direct result of the Library Power project, demonstrates the movement of the library initiative beyond the one goal of renewal of the book collection to the larger goal of improving the way reading and thinking are best taught.

Student Achievement and Parent Perceptions

It may be that in a district where reading, language, and math scores are high, SAT and ACT scores are higher than the national average, and 80% of high school graduates go on to postsecondary education, the overall measures of student achievement would be difficult to raise substantially.

The Lincoln teams understand that true impact on student achievement takes time and commitment to demonstrate. A wide body of research suggests that frequent meaningful practice, modeled and reinforced at time of need and delivered in a context of authentic application, is key to improving student performance. At Lincoln, such approaches were common prior to Library Power. Today, these approaches are enhanced and delivered by more librarians and classroom teachers who model the use of a wide variety of resources for depth of understanding and critical analysis for effective problem solving.

An extensive phone survey of LPS parents is conducted annually by the LPS Evaluation Department. One portion of the survey asks parents to judge how well they think the Lincoln schools are doing in various curricular areas. The survey is unusual in that it takes place at all, as most school districts do not gather such data on a systematic annual basis, and in that "use of the school library" is included along with such skills as reading, solving arithmetic problems, understanding science, and a dozen other curricular areas.

Evidence from this survey has additional importance because it was not part of a Library Power self-administered evaluation, but part of a standard and routine measure with clear benchmarks documented for several years prior to Library Power. In the years preceding Library Power, the percentage of parents who indicated the LPS schools were doing a "very good job of teaching students to use the library" hovered at 40%. This percentage had held steady with little fluctuation, as was the case with most other curricular areas. Receiving a higher percentage of approval than "using the library" were "learning to read" at 47%, "appreciation for art and music" at 45%, and "express themselves in writing" at 43%. The lowest percentages of parents indicating high approval were reported for "understanding science" at 32%, "understanding social studies" at 29%, and "appreciate drama" at 20%.

The 1995 survey, conducted 18 months into the Library Power project, resulted in similar numbers as before for measurement of all other curricular

areas except "use of the library and media center," which climbed from 40% of the parents reporting "very good" to 51%. Not only was this by far the largest gain, it was the only curricular area for which a majority of the respondents gave a "very good" rating.

Closer examination of the data from annual telephone surveys from 1992 to 1995 reveals that "student understanding in how to use the library" had the highest mean rating of any of the curricular areas measured during each of those years. The 1995 mean of 4.45, with 5.00 representing the highest possible rating, for "how to use the library" represented the greatest increase in approval ratings from 1993 to 1995 of any of the curricular areas measured. Results of the 1996 survey, obtained during the April 1997 site visit, indicate continuing high parental approval, especially in the areas of reading, writing, and school library use. Ninety percent of the parents surveyed indicated they were satisfied with the quality of education their child was receiving. Just over 80% indicated the Lincoln schools were doing an excellent job in teaching students to read and write, to become independent learners, to work cooperatively, to use the library, and to reason and solve problems logically.

Community Awareness

The Lincoln Library Power Project Director reported in 1995 that, "The community component of our grant has at times been one of the most difficult areas to do well, and yet has become one of our biggest success stories." Community participation was a goal in every aspect of the project's implementation. In the eight Library Power community relations committees, 65% of the membership came from the community and 35% from school staff. Meetings were often held in local schools, but were also held in the public library branches and meeting rooms of local cooperating businesses.

Elementary school libraries often formed partnerships with local bookstores in order to sponsor author visits. The local newspaper and radio stations sponsored the publication and broadcast of student-written book reviews. Over 4,000 students participated in the first year of the book review project. Some local fast-food chains sponsored student information search activities, offering rewards for finding answers to reference and local trivia questions, reading contests, and book discussion forums such as the Lincoln Literacy Roundtable.

The Lincoln Hispanic Center Heritage Festival cooperated with Lincoln Library Power to sponsor storytellers and readers for children as well as displays of multicultural books. It was reported that over 8,000 community members and teachers attended the 1995 gatherings.

Facilities Improvement

LPS libraries are not dramatically impressive visually. They are practical and functional facilities. Flexibility of space, barrier-free access to materials, areas for group work in support of conversations for learning, and areas to display

and value student products are basic guiding principles in LPS facility design. Prior to the Library Power project, a school library facility needs analysis identified new adjustable shelving with lower shelving units to allow for clear vision across the library; new furniture for periodical and book displays, as well as tables and chairs for more group work; soft seating for independent reading; and new carpet for sound control, better aesthetics, and comfort as children often use the floor for many study activities. Over one fourth of the school libraries requested more square footage, better ventilation, and electrical work to improve lighting levels and increase the number of electrical outlets.

The combination of local Building Advisory Group dream lists, coordination by the district's Facilities Supervisor, and a four-to-one match in funding by the district provided dramatic results. Ten elementary school libraries were increased from 1,500 square feet to the accepted norm in the district of 2,400 square feet. Three libraries were moved to a new area of the school in order to increase their size and provide room for instructional purposes and large group work. Access ramps, lower shelving, wider aisles, and the acquisition of audio-books and large-print materials increased the potential for use of the library by disabled students and parents. Most local schools also formed their own decorating group or made plans with the art teacher for colorful and inviting murals in renovated school library facilities.

Growth in Confidence

The Library Power experience gave confidence to several key Lincoln project participants. This confidence has been shown through additional educational reform initiatives supported by the LPS Foundation and a bonding with community institutions that was not present prior to the grant award. The Lincoln Public School Foundation continues to seek and attract outside funding using the Library Power experience as a model. In the district, the Foundation provides incentives to creative teachers who propose activities based on team teaching, multidisciplinary themes, and extensive use of modern resources supporting multicultural issues. The LPS Director of Library Media Services has placed a high priority on building stronger long-range cooperative relations with the Lincoln City (public) Library. Sharing of book resources, planning for joint online catalog access, continued support of reading initiatives, even shared use of some facility areas are among the items being discussed. A strong working relationship with the public library Coordinator of Youth Services continues with a new person in that position. The Coordinator is a frequent participant in monthly meetings of the Lincoln school librarians.

Institutionalization

In 1998, the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AASL & AECT) issued *Information Power: Partnerships for Learning*. The new library guidelines call

for collaborative efforts in the school and in the community like those that evolved from 1994 to 1997 in Lincoln. Institutionalization of such partnerships may depend largely on the educational framework and attitudes that will embrace the student proficiencies outlined in the new literacy standards.

The Lincoln Public Schools are securely in a position to assimilate information proficiencies with leadership from their librarian ranks and from administrative, consultant, classroom teacher, and community groups as well. Institutionalization assumes there is a common cause, a shared doctrine, a set of goals on which the various parts of the institution can unite and move forward. The necessary institutional structure, human caution and reason, professional work ethic to commit and renew, and stability of the greater community seem to be in place at Lincoln. The test will be how well the Lincoln educators continue to model information proficiencies for their students and provide continued professional development for each other in support of these key proficiencies from the latest Information Power (AASL & AEEt,1998):

- Students and educators will access, evaluate, and use information accurately, efficiently, ethically, creatively, and effectively.
- Students and educators will value and support independent learning in respect of personal interests, appreciation for literature and creative expression, and the process for generation of new knowledge.
- Students and educators will contribute to the learning community by recognizing the importance of open and truthful information in a democratic society, and the right of each person to seek meaningful solutions to their information and literacy needs.

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