

Becoming Your Own Best Advocate: Using Research of Persuasive Dan Influence

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Abstract

Advocates for school library programs have focused on messaging and evidence, yet the support for school libraries continues to decline, paradoxically in the era of information access and management. Working with a team of researchers, Ken Haycock has been investigating the principles by which some school districts and principals support school libraries and others do not. Through extensive examination of decisions taken in difficult financial times, and the behaviors of teacher-librarians and school administrators in determining financial, policy and administrative support, six principles have been validated and several conclusions drawn, not the least of which is that attitude does not necessarily translate to behavior, in other words, hearing words of support does not necessarily mean that action follows the words.

The six principles, first enunciated and applied here, are:

Authority, as we listen to those with expertise and we follow those with power and influence (school principals are influential as opinion leaders as well as decision-makers);

Commitment and Consistency, wherein one's values and beliefs and prior statements are determinants of how and why we make decisions (a decision-maker's beliefs about education become important);

Liking, or liking one or the other (one gets a hearing if one is liked, or at least perceived to like the decision-maker);

Reciprocity, as we are more inclined to return favours than support those who are not perceived as helpful;

Scarcity, as we value what is not available from any other source (distinguishing oneself from the classroom teacher's contribution alone as well as from the crowded world of "free" information is critical);

Social Proof, such that we look to see what others in the same position are doing (which is why cuts in one area quickly become endemic).

Examples of what teacher-librarians and others do to become more effective become apparent to help inform future directions in education and training and workplace behaviors.

Keywords: school libraries, school librarians, staffing decisions

Biographical note

Ken Haycock is research professor of management and organization at the Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California, where he directs graduate programs in library and information management. He was previously director of the San Jose School of Library and Information Science, Silicon Valley's global e-campus and the largest graduate LIS program in the world. He previously had a distinguished career in public education as a senior education official, school principal and coordinator of school libraries. Dr. Haycock is an award-winning researcher and teacher and a life member of the IASL.