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Developing a Collection Map

The library media collection includes all resources available in the school library media center along with all those that students and teachers can make use of beyond the media center's four walls. In order to determine how well library media collections support the curriculum, the library advisory committee should develop three kinds of collection maps:

A total collection map portrays a broad picture of the current state of the collection as a whole.

A technology access map depicts the extent to which teachers and students have access to technology.

Emphasis area maps present a portrait of the current status of the collection and information about how well it matches and supports specific areas of the school curriculum.

Developing a collection map is a six-step process.

Step 1

Collect Data on the Total Collection

Collect data on the total collection by estimating the number of items in each of the different Dewey categories and in specific categories such as reference and folklore. Count nonbook resources, too: CD-ROMs, online databases, computer software, videos, periodicals, and cassette recordings. Be sure to include distance resources such as telecommunication services and cooperative purchasing or lending groups. List the totals for each category on a chart. Calculate the number of items per student in each category. Add information concerning the age and quality of each collection category.

Step 2

Collect Data on the Access Teachers and Student Have to Technology

Gather information on both the general technology (such as VCRs and telephones) and the computer technology available in the school. You will also want to gather data on students' and teachers' home access to computers and the Internet.

Step 3

Collect Data on Specific Emphasis Areas of the Collection

Emphasis areas may serve large curricular subjects such as animals or specific topics such as the Civil War. Survey all teachers in your school, asking them to identify three to five units or areas of study that they teach in each course. Shifts in the curriculum, standards, technology, teaching styles, and student populations mean that emphasis areas may change from year to year. Remember, emphasis areas may cross a number of Dewey sections. For example, resources for a unit on Africa might be found in biographies, history, geography, art, music, and food.

Step 4

Create Collection Maps

Develop collection maps in the form of bar graphs, diagrams, or a series of pie charts to describe for students, teachers, parents, and your community partners what the collection looks like now. You may want to display the collection map(s) on a bulletin board outside the school library media center for easy visibility.

Step 5

Analyze Collected Data

Use your collection maps to stimulate discussions about the ways you need to begin to develop your collections. For example, data in your collection maps can help you:

- Evaluate whether the collection matches the curriculum of the school.
- Identify areas of the collection that needs to be emphasized, de-emphasized, or maintained.
- Identify areas of the collection that need weeding.
- Identify areas of the collection that can be supported by information resources and partnerships in the broader community.
- Identify technology needs.
- Identify budget priorities.

Step 6

Create Proposed Collection Maps

Proposed collections maps show collection targets for a 2-4 year period of time. They provide a picture of "where we want to go." In developing proposed collection maps, it is important to understand the current curriculum and likely curricular changes on the horizon, the normal evolution of topics taught, trends in print and electronic publishing, and changes in the student population.