

libraries co-operate: challenges, new solutions

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the goals of both organizations. For example, school libraries could host programs at open house nights to orient three-year-olds to the library and to train parents on early literacy activities, with public librarians orienting the same children and their families to the services of the public library. Public libraries could host programs to encourage family literacy and reading success, especially among ESL families, with schools promoting this program to invitees they know will benefit most, and with other agencies providing early ID screening to identify at-risk children - for example, those with speech delays - for referral to their services. Both could jointly plan to help meet the community service requirements of secondary students through volunteer work in each others' libraries.

Lobbying for support

Schools, libraries and community agencies could also collaborate to lobby governments and other bodies to provide better support for their programs. For example, they might jointly lobby for funding to try to get Canadian research done to prove that lifelong library use contributes to higher literacy, better

school performance, and other social benefits. They might also plan joint surveys or focus groups to determine community needs - such as the needs of ESL students - in order to support their demands for better funding. Public libraries could also lend support to French Immersion schools in lobbying provincial education ministries to provide curriculum documentation in French.

Access

Schools and public libraries could overlap their services by cooperating to provide access for all students. Web pages linking public and school libraries would give students easy access to databases and digital libraries. Cooperative outreach planning would help reach particular audiences including the reluctant readers and ESL students. Materials written in several languages help students remove barriers.

Both groups felt that professional lobbying was key to advocating for both public and school libraries. Together we send a strong message that giving access to lifelong learners is key and only with the support of libraries is this possible. ■

President's comment:

Mississauga Library System Chief Librarian Don Mills spent two and a half days at the OLA Summit on School Libraries in May. His support and involvement are amply demonstrated by this excellent symposium for Peel area librarians and stakeholders. This is another example of the power of all OLA libraries working together on issues that affect us all.

