

# *How to Convince Teachers to Collaborate With You, the Teacher-Librarian*

**Kelly Dawson**

**S**o school is in full swing and you have your elementary school library up and running, but no matter how hard you try, you can't talk the classroom teachers into taking some time out of their busy schedules to plan a unit or two with you. You've read the research: a qualified teacher-librarian, working in conjunction with classroom teachers, can have a positive influence on student achievement and learning. How do you get started? Here are some tips to help you woo teachers into planning with you.

◆ **Be visible and accessible!**

The seeds for collaborative growth need to be planted long before the end of the first month of school. The staff needs to see you as someone who is approachable in the staff room, in the hallways, or in the mailroom. Never skip out on social opportunities (like weekly recess treats) for developing open and friendly relationships with your colleagues. Who wants to plan with someone who is cold and reclusive outside of his/her domain?

◆ **Share something at every staff meeting!**

It could be a fantastic website for that new Media Literacy strand, or a fabulous print resource to support Character Education, or a Power Point presentation on "How to Avoid Plagiarism." Remind teachers that you can help implement all-of-the-above. You can make their jobs easier!

◆ **Use a "hook"!**

Show that you are technologically savvy by introducing a new technology, a new program or a

new website to one class. News travels fast! If the children are excited about the activity, they will share with their friends. Perhaps your school has a Smart Board that is under-utilized... make yourself the "expert" and invite one class at a time to come to the library for a demonstration lesson. Teachers will be more willing to "buy in" if you can show them a different way to engage their students.

◆ **Advertise!**

Let people know what you are doing! Establish a bulletin board of exciting library activities. Make announcements over the PA system to highlight these events. Update your library link to the school website to keep the community up-to-date. Always have a corner in the school monthly newsletter. Teachers will be more likely to connect with you if they can see that you make a difference.

◆ **Demonstrate your leadership skills!**

Make sure that you're involved in all the literacy initiatives in the school. Plan an evening event for your community, like a "pyjama reading night" for primary students, or a school-wide literacy evening. Show the staff that you are capable and knowledgeable. You are a person who can provide professional advice to others!

The bottom line? If teachers see you as approachable, well organized, professional and – most importantly – able to save them time and effort, they will be more likely to collaborate with you. ■

*Start with one tip and build upon it.  
The students will thank you for it.*