

Dear Rita,

My principal wants me to collaborate with every class, and for the most part, everything works fine—except for one teacher, whom I'll call "Mr. X". When Mr. X and his class come to the library, he leaves them and acts like it's an additional prep. We are supposed to be working together, but Mr. X avoids making time with me to plan anything. On the rare occasion when he bothers to stay in the library, he doesn't interact with the students and brings marking to do in a corner. We really don't "click" well as a team—so how do I team-teach with someone who really doesn't want to be there?

*Yours truly,
Team Player Without the Team*

Dear Team Player,

There always seems to be one who doesn't fit the norm, doesn't there? Like most seasoned teacher-librarians, I've been there and conquered that problem, so I'm quite sure you can, too!

To begin with, "think of collaborative partnerships as the process of developing a trusting relationship between two or more professional colleagues. Collaborative relationships are enabled by recognizing the varied roles served by individuals of the learning community (including the teacher-librarian), modelling desired practices, acting proactively, and providing personal experience and expertise" ("The School Library Media Specialist", <http://eduscapes.com>).

I would suggest that you find a venue to inform your whole staff of your unique role in the school. This could be done with a PowerPoint presentation at a staff meeting, or a brochure in each teacher's mailbox—whatever is easiest, friendliest, and most effective. Make sure you stress the collaborative nature of your job, and give lots of examples of work you've done with other staff members in the past. If your staff is familiar with Professional Learning Communities and their underlying educational principles, you should be able to make a connection between the philosophy behind PLCs and that of collaboration, since the goal of working together for student success is the same.

Outline your expectations (and those of your administration) that classes using the library need to be booked through you, and that they will all be collaborative endeavours to some extent. In this communication, really focus on the benefits for the students and the classroom teacher. Stress the fabulous things that happen when staff members collaborate! After all, "the goal of a true collaboration is to demonstrate that 'two heads are better than one'.

Collectively, teachers and specialists have been able to achieve better results than if they had taught separately." (*The New Learning Commons: Where Learners Win!*, 2008.)

Greet this particular teacher one-on-one before he books into the library. Tell him that you are looking forward to working collaboratively with him on his next research unit. Suggest a time when the two of you can sit down to discuss the expectations, resources, timelines, etc., and to outline who will be doing what. Make sure you let him know that you are interested in taking on part of the assessment as well as the teaching and facilitating, but stress that he knows the students' individual strengths and learning styles. Maybe you could even give him a specific task to do—a part of the lesson and/or a checklist of learning skills.

After trying as many of these strategies as you can, please keep in mind that with this particular teacher, you may never get to actual team teaching. Your time and energy may be better suited to collaboratively planning with those colleagues who are more willing and appreciative of your time and efforts.

Rita

*Do you have any school
library concerns or gripes?
Need advice?*

*Just ask Rita!
contact Rita at
rita@accessola.com
You'll never regret it!*



She's reliable, reasonable, rich in experience... and always right!