

Evaluation Plan for Reference Services

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Analysis of Current Collection

SML Christian Academy houses a number of different reference collections, housed in a variety of classrooms as the school does not have a formal school library at this time. Due to these circumstances, the focus of this analysis and plan will be for the topic of Weather, which is part of the grade five Science curriculum. This collection is currently found in the grade five classroom, which in addition to the various grade five science topics, contains social studies resources, but the vast majority of the library is composed of fiction titles.

The weather reference collection contains ten physical titles, but many of these titles have poor currency with the oldest title being published in 1982 and the most current published in 2016. The accuracy of these resources is quite reliable, which is why they have not been discarded, however, the currency is certainly in question. Riedling indicates in *Reference Skills for the School Library Media Specialist* that “printed resources are often considered to be out of date before they reach the student” (pg. 22), however, in a context in which technology is not always readily available or reliable, print resources may be the only option. The collection is well-utilized by students and the teacher, however there are simply not enough resources for one for each student in the class, which means that during research tasks without technology, students are limited.

The reference collection does not provide opportunities for student learning unless the student is at or above reading level, which is unrealistic given the student population of SML Christian Academy. Currently, the average grade five student reads at a 4.1 reading level, which

translates to a beginning grade four reading level. The school, while trying to strengthen their students' reading skills and ability to decode text, make inferences, and connections, is simply unsuccessful with helping every single student grow in every single one of these ways, as there may be a lack of support at home, a lack of scaffolding, or a multitude of other factors.

Rationale for Change

As there are not enough physical resources for all students, a change must be made to provide access to every student in the class in any given year. Since SML caps its classes at 24, there must be 24 resources made available. Access needs to be improved, which includes access to learning materials at a variety of reading levels, access to technology, and access to technology extensions to increase reading comprehension, vocabulary, and general understanding.

Currently, students at SML have limited access to technology simply due to the lack of technology within the school. At the moment, there are two Chromebook carts, each consisting of a class set being used by grades three through nine, and two class sets of iPads being used in the kindergarten through grade two classes. At times throughout the year, older grades typically use the iPads for research and learning through apps, but do not use the iPads nearly as much as the younger grades do. In the next school year, SML will be a one-to-one technology environment in grades four through nine, which will increase student access to online reference materials.

In addition, a new change has occurred with the availability of online reference materials. The Alberta Education representative for the school has provided the school with its jurisdiction username and password, allowing staff full access to Alberta Education's *Online Reference Centre* (2019) which includes reference materials from Scholastic's *ScienceFLIX*, the *World*

Book series, and *National Geographic's Kids Virtual Library*. Each of these online reference sources would otherwise be paid for, which would result in a yearly subscription of over \$1 000 – a sum the school simply cannot afford at this time. Students will need to be taught how to utilize these resources, which is another reason why change must be made within the school. Riedling indicates that teacher-librarians need to be well-versed in using the reference process (pg. 6), which utilizes information, student knowledge, and coming toward an answer. This process can be transferred to students by allowing students to work toward inquiry projects, which is outlined by the BCTLA document *Points of Inquiry*. In the document, the need is mentioned for students to understand the questioning process, to learn how to be actively involved in research, as well as come up with their own thoughts and ideas about the information presented to them in reference materials (2011, pg. 4-6).

Plan for Change

First of all, the resources used and accumulated may be updated by purchasing newer, more current copies, as well as multiples of each text. This will require funds from the school budget outside of the classroom budget to replace each text. The average cost of each non-fiction text resource averages \$15, so replacing and purchasing 24 total copies (one for each student) would require funds in the area of \$360. This change can take place with support from the principal, business administrator, and the school board, who are all involved in making financial decisions. This change may take place at any point in the school year, however, many of the titles are available for purchase throughout the year at Chapters, so an appropriate replacement time may be during one of Chapters' Teachers Appreciation events where teachers can receive up to 30% off of purchases. Staff and students will be made aware of this change and these purchases shortly after they have been made, at the following staff meeting. The classroom

teacher purchasing these materials will explain that currency and accuracy are the most important reasons for replacing the reference materials.

In addition, by implementing a one-to-one policy, students will be able to access Alberta's *Online Reference Centre* consistently which includes a variety of reference materials for no cost. The classroom teacher will be required to teach students how to use the databases effectively (there is and will be no opportunities for a Teacher-Librarian to gain employment in a teacher-librarianship role within the school). The school board, staff, and administration have all committed to providing access to students at a variety of reading levels, which indicates their support for the one-to-one policy for the 2019-2020 school year. Staff have received the information to access the material from the *Online Reference Centre* and have been working independently to learn how best to utilize the reference materials for their purposes. Staff have been made aware of this change and availability, but will be reminded of the necessary information and access at the staff meeting in August.

Finally, the change will take place by providing technology extensions to allow students to utilize the databases and online features of the *Online Reference Centre*. The extensions which will be provided to students will be Read&Write (texthelp), Wiki-Wand, and Color Overlay (Rawstream). Each of these extensions are available to be provided to students at very little cost or are free of charge for the school. These three extensions provide assistance to students who require help with processing material. The Read&Write extension provides overlays, text-to-speech functionality, picture dictionaries, and the ability to highlight text for summarizing material. The Wikiwand extension allows students to access more student-friendly text and formatting of Wikipedia articles, which increases access and comprehension. The Color Overlay extension provides Irlen Syndrome students with the ability to use colour-coded overlays with

the click of a few buttons. Our staff have noticed a significant increase over the last few years with students testing positive for Irlen Syndrome who may have been or previously were diagnosed with dyslexia. These students simply need an overlay (change to the screen's colour) to access material. SML currently has three teachers on staff who are Irlen screeners, and have determined at least ten students in the school between the grades of four to seven who have Irlen Syndrome. The school board, administration, and staff are all committed to ensuring access for students at SML, and see the need for Irlen screening and extensions to support students with a variety of needs. Luckily, the biases some teachers may have about the use of technology for research is not present at SML. The purpose and widespread understanding among staff is that the purpose of utilizing technology is to “work [together] to design challenges to empower student-led collaborative learning. Students learn how to build personal learning networks” (*Leading Learning*, 2014, pg. 11). These three extensions are available immediately and have recently been force-installed on each of the students' school G-Suite accounts. Staff will be made aware of the change when it is presented to them in a staff meeting, and the students will be made aware of the change as classroom teachers utilize the technology and teach students how to use it effectively for their own use.

Potential challenges with carrying out this plan for change include: parent buy-in, reliability of Wi-Fi, and student understanding of the purpose of integrating technology. Parents can be brought on board to this plan by seeing the use of databases and newer books being used in the classroom. They can help their students work on assignments from home as the technology is portable, versus the books not leaving school property. The reliability of Wi-Fi is significant, but additional signal boosters may be purchased, or the Wi-Fi may require a service by the provider. Finally, students will need time to buy into the idea that traditional textbooks may be

replaced with databases and online sources. Students may appreciate the ease of use, and when shown the Chrome extensions, may find them appealing to increase their own comprehension.

Determining the Success of the Plan

The success of the plan will be determined by three items: the use of the newly purchased classroom reference materials, the use of the *Online Reference Centre*, and the use of the Chrome extensions. Data may be collected from the classroom teacher by recording what the classroom teacher thinks about the new reference materials in comparison to the previous materials used in previous years. Data regarding the use of the *Online Reference Centre* could be conducted through surveying students and staff about how they feel regarding the effectiveness of using the online reference materials and databases. This survey could also be done in correlation with surveying students regarding their use of the Chrome extensions. Suggested questions to gather data may be to have students compare their use of physical books versus online reference materials, as well as their own ease or difficulty in reading text online versus hard copy print. Other ways the success of the plan may be determined may be in observing student morale, as confidence will likely increase, as well as increasing staff confidence in utilizing online materials. Finally, the success of the plan will be dependent upon the support and efforts put forth by the school board, administration, staff, and students.

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