

Questions for Superintendents



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- Superintendent of Muncie Community Schools since 2015
- Strong believer in partnerships across community organizations
- Academic preparation includes: Masters in Library and Information Science from University of Iowa
- AASL School Library Program of the Year winner in 2000
- SLS School Librarian of the Year 1996
- Son of a librarian

- We've heard a lot about what is happening with collaboration between the school and public library in your city. Can you briefly describe how you personally got involved?

The Muncie PL director at the time, Ginny Nilles, reached out to me when I first came to Muncie and offered to help in any way she could. After some initial review of the school library program, it was clear there was a ton of work to do. We agreed to start on a collaborative catalog as that as tangible and MCS needed a union catalog.

We arranged a meeting with the MPL Board and went from there. Ginny took the lead in writing a \$40K grant from a local philanthropic organization to start the process.

- What was the history of collaboration between your institutions prior to this initiative, and how did this one begin?

Historically, MPL collaboration was limited to having a MCS appointee serve on the MPL Board. MPL provided some after school programming, but no really collaborative projects; MPL was deeply involved in a range of community issues, but historically MCS kept all potential partners at arm's length

- From where you sit, what are the benefits of the partnership in your city--and then this kind of partnership in general--for the kids, the school, and the community?

The partnership allows MPL to focus on materials selection, management, and technical aspects of the library process. MCS's professional library staff will be able to focus on having an instructional impact. Think of the upper end of Loertscher's Taxonomy

- What are the issues/concerns/challenges you grapple with as a superintendent?

Let's just say finances and opening the doors to partnership organizations were important.

- How does this collaboration help you deliver on your key mission/ strategic direction of your district?

The MPL was an important partner in developing our Strategic Plan; MPL was represented on several key committees throughout the process including the MPL director who served on the oversight committee which managed all five task forces.

- For someone hoping to initiate this kind of collaboration in their city, what kinds of things would you suggest they prepare to make their case to a superintendent in their setting, or other key stakeholders at the high level

Communications and relationships are essential; the MPL directors and staff have really gone out of their way to build those relationships

- ✓ Invited superintendent to get a library card (used 162 times since July 2015)
- ✓ Gave superintendent an overview and tour of the public library
- ✓ Invited superintendent to library board meeting
- ✓ Regularly attend school board meetings
- ✓ Offered to help write grants
- ✓ Retired director volunteered to help weed school collections

- In turn, who were the other key stakeholders you had to get on board to move this forward? And, what kinds of information/perspective did you bring to them?

School library staff was important to get on board; the school board was an easy sell; the teachers' union fought against any partnerships; MCS has had to change its culture to be more inclusive of partners

- What do you say, when you talk about this partnership with leadership in the city or from other institutions? (key takeaways, benefits, strategic positioning)
- This has helped both organizations improve their strategic performance
- The partnership is more efficient and effective than duplicating efforts; allows school staff to focus on instructional issues
- Better library access for children in the summer
- Used one of the public libraries as a summer feeding site; books were given away there as well
- Has elevated the conversation about early literacy throughout the community