



## Exploration to Identify Professional Dispositions of School Librarians: A Delphi Study

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### Abstract

*This article reports the findings of an exploratory study to identify professional dispositions of school librarians. The authors employed the Delphi method, a qualitative research method that emphasizes expert knowledge and consensus within a particular field. The Delphi panel consisted of members of the editorial boards of nationally recognized school library journals in the United States. Panelists independently forecasted and described the identified professional dispositions, commented on eleven prominent dispositions that received the most responses, and ranked and combined categories of dispositions. The results of this study provide a foundation for further exploration of professional dispositions, leading to the design of signature pedagogies for use in school library education, appropriate assessment measures for both school library education and practicing school librarians, and thoughtful and reflective consideration of the acquisition and nurturance of these dispositions.*

### Introduction

The 2007 release of the *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* by the American Association for School Librarians (AASL) introduced the concept “dispositions in action,” an idea new to school librarianship and not found in the conventional vocabulary of the field. The hierarchical framework of AASL’s *Standards* fosters high expectations for today’s learners because the skills, dispositions, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies represented by these standards will provide the foundation for learning throughout life . . . and . . . serve as guideposts for school library media specialists (SLMSs) and other educators in their teaching because these skills and dispositions are most effectively taught as an integral part of content learning. (AASL 2009, 5)

Even though the focus of these standards is on the learner, the support of a strong school library is assumed. This mindset mirrors the thinking of national professional groups, which recognize that teacher quality is vital to student learning and achievement (see, for example, Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005). The authors of the AASL *Standards* conclude that “a strong

school library media program (SLMP) that offers a highly-qualified school library media specialist” is “implicit within every standard and indicator” (AASL 2009, 5).

The AASL dispositions in action introduced expectations not evident in past standards and led to questions stemming from the fear of noneffective practice, obsolescence, and job loss (Jones and Bush 2009a). After much anecdotal discussion with, and interest from, colleagues from across the country, these concerns spurred us to explore the concept of dispositions within the school library profession.

## Why Dispositions, and Why Now?

A review of the literature reveals the ongoing struggle by educators to understand the concept of professional dispositions. The recent interest in dispositions arose from the 1980s standards movement to restructure America’s schools that was largely the result of efforts by three professional groups: the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Their efforts culminated in the 1996 publication of *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future* by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF), a twenty-six-member panel that concluded that school improvement is heavily dependent on improving the quality of teachers (Clark 2005).

The NCTAF set six goals in its report. The first goal states, “All children will be taught by teachers who have knowledge, skills, and commitment [a term that precedes the use of dispositions] to teach children well” (Darling-Hammond 1996, 196). NCTAF recognized that if the United States is to prepare all of its children for the challenges of the twenty-first century, it must be able to recruit and retain able, well-prepared teachers for all classrooms. These entrants must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to enable them to succeed with all students.

As a result, the three participating professional groups developed teacher-education-program standards that stress the importance of performance-based assessments of teacher quality. The CCSSO’s robust Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards, published in 1992, are divided into the categories of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The operating premise of INTASC is that effective teachers integrate content knowledge with pedagogical understanding to ensure that all students learn at high levels. The professional dispositions that are implicit to the ten INTASC principles are:

- Embracing reflection necessary to lifelong learning and communicating
- Understanding the diversity of students and recognizing and promoting growth in others
- Promoting positive social interaction and developing health and helpful relationships with children and youth
- Integrity and collaboration to advocate for children
- Understanding and using a variety of instructional strategies, planning, organizing, and goal-setting (Jones and Bush 2009a).

By contrast, NCATE leaves the identification of additional dispositions (except for fairness and belief, which all children can learn) to individual teacher education preparation programs. NCATE defines professional dispositions as professional attitudes, values, and beliefs

demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development. (NCATE 2007, 89)

NBPTS does not define dispositions at all; it expects that proficient teachers are able to employ the necessary “skills, capacities, and dispositions” in the interest of students (2002, 2).

## The Definition of Dispositions

Progressive educational philosopher John Dewey (1922) laid the foundation for dispositions by contemplating the question, “Why do some well-educated people function at higher levels than others?” Dewey attributes this functioning to a “readiness to act overtly in a specific fashion whenever opportunity is presented” (41).

Building solidly on Dewey’s assertion, Arnstine was first to extend the philosophical discussion about dispositions to the educational field (Freeman 2007). Arnstine views learning as the acquisition of “behaviors, knowledge, skills, habits, and attitudes” (1967, 13). The latter he defines as dispositions. Learning therefore is the continuing and lengthy process of acquiring and developing a great number of abilities and attitudes—or dispositions—or the changing of old ones.

Arnstine characterizes dispositions as:

- Predictive of future behavior in which “something or someone has a tendency to behave in certain ways when certain conditions are realized”
- Verifiable (or able to be assessed), but “only after the occurrence of several relevant tests or observations . . . that is, the more varied are the situations during which we observe an ascribed disposition being exercised, the more likely we are to assign credibility to the ascription” (Arnstine 1967, 32).

Arnstine laid the foundation for dispositions in education, but Katz and Raths moved the discussion about effectiveness and teacher quality to the forefront of teacher education by proposing that the “goals of teacher education programs should include a class of outcomes we call professional dispositions” that focus “exclusively upon behaviors of teachers related to effective teaching in the classroom” (1986, 302).

Katz defines *disposition* as a “tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed toward a broad goal” (1993, 2). Katz and Raths describe these as a “pattern of acts that were chosen by the teacher in particular contexts and at particular times” (1986, 7). We are not using the term *dispositions* to indicate a cause of behavior—the construct is descriptive rather than explanatory. For example, a teacher does not praise children because of a disposition to be supportive; rather, a teacher observed to make use of praise in a number of contexts and on frequent occasions might be described as having a supportive disposition (Katz and Raths 1986, 301–2).

## The Complex Concept of Dispositions

There are several reasons for the misunderstanding of dispositions, including semantics and dispositions' identification, acquisition, and assessment. Each is briefly explored in the following section.

One confusion is rooted in semantics. Words such as *skill*, *trait*, *attitude*, *habit*, *belief*, and *characteristic* are used interchangeably to mean *disposition* (Knopp and Smith 2005; Jones and Bush 2009b). Using these words as conceptually synonymous with disposition muddies the waters and diffuses the conversation regarding observable educational behaviors. A brief description of these terms relative to disposition is identified below:

- *Skills* “carries with it a sense of mastery” (Katz and Rath 1986, 5). One can be skilled without having a disposition for that skill. For example, even students that are skillful at comprehending readings will not necessarily frequently and voluntarily engage with reading (in other words, exhibit the disposition of reading).
- *Traits* and are qualities that are consistent, enduring, and independent of a situation. For instance, eye color and height are inborn traits that cannot be changed. Traits are often related to personality and temperament whereas dispositions convey choice in employing an appropriate behavior at an appropriate time (Friedman and Schustack 2006).
- *Attitudes* are judgments regarding likes and dislikes that can be changed, and they often are measured using various scales that gauge one's stance toward a situation or issue. *Habits* are learned behaviors displayed routinely without forethought or reflection. For instance, putting on a seat belt when we get into a car is a habit (Katz and Rath 1986, 6–8).
- Other nouns, such as *belief* and *characteristic*, add to the semantic confusion of the meaning of disposition. A belief is an opinion or conviction that may or may not be substantiated whereas a characteristic pertains to a quality of a person or thing (Jones and Bush 2009b).

The second misunderstanding is the identification of dispositions. Even though standards organizations such as NCATE and NBPTS agree that dispositions are integral to quality teaching, confusion exists when they are not identified. In 1996, Collinson asked the most capable teachers she knew to describe exemplary teaching characteristics that reveal strengths in three areas: professional knowledge of the subject and pedagogy, interpersonal knowledge of students and the community, and intrapersonal knowledge such as reflection, ethics, and dispositions. Similarly, as former students ourselves, we know instinctively the qualities of exemplary educators even if we have difficulty naming these qualities. In 2006, Cushman asked sixty-five high school students to describe the qualities they most wanted in their teachers. The students responded that teachers must like their students, be trustworthy, and treat students as smart and capable of challenging work. In addition, students want engaging classes taught by teachers who like and care about the material they teach. Students want teachers who exhibit dispositions of care, trustworthiness, and respect for them.

The third concern is whether dispositions are inborn qualities or are acquired developmentally through modeling. Observational and qualitative research on “bedside manner” provides insight into the frequently posed question, “Can dispositions be taught?” Weissmann et al. (2006) studied twelve clinical faculty who were identified by medical residents as excellent teachers of humanistic care—popularly known as “bedside manner,” which is identified within the affective

domain and includes patient care and communication skills—to determine how these dispositions were taught to medical residents. The findings of this eighteen-month qualitative and observational research indicate that clinical faculty members teach humanism and professional values almost exclusively by role-modeling, and “generally, they assumed that learners would recognize, learn, and emulate their behaviors without added comment or direction” (Weissmann et. al. 2006, 662). Bedside manner is modeled in the following ways:

- Nonverbal cues, such as demonstrating care, tone of voice, and appropriate touching
- Demonstrations of respect, such as making proper introductions or asking the patient’s permission before turning down the volume of the television
- Building personal connection by using shared experiences to bond with the patient
- Awareness of their influence on students and residents

Sockett views modeling as the preferred method of dispositional attainment, even though “this point may be subtle, but it is critical. If the faculty model the dispositions they want candidates to hold, then the candidates are more likely to develop them” (2006, 65).

The fourth confusion regards assessment of professional dispositions. The research by Lund et al. (2007) to identify dispositions of beginning physical education teachers exemplifies the difficulty of assessment. Even though dispositions such as trustworthiness, dedication, and taking initiative were identified as important in the pedagogical and theoretical literature of physical education and were indicated as important by 90 percent of the faculty interviewed, assessment of these behaviors occurred 50 percent of the time or less. Lund et al. maintain that assessment of dispositions is especially complicated when the observable behaviors are difficult to define.

This realization—that *we* must identify the dispositions we value, that there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to dispositions—may lead to uneasiness in some professionals who are uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. These notions were evident in the responses and comments made by Delphi study panelists, notwithstanding the NCATE definition of dispositions that was provided to them. It is within this context of dispositions and the AASL Standards that we sought to investigate the expert thinking about professional dispositions of school librarians, which had not previously been studied.

## The Delphi Study

The qualitative research method selected for this study was the Delphi method, which emphasizes expert knowledge within a particular field. Early Delphi studies, predominantly conducted by the Rand Corporation in the 1950s for the U.S. Air Force and others, focused on forecasting future trends using data collected in the form of expert opinions expressed in response to broad questions (Dalkey 1969; Rowe and Wright 1999). This research technique was quickly adopted by corporate planning teams concerned about the cost and time of participant involvement (Crance 1987). The use of independent, reliable responses to queries that invite participants to use their individual experiences as a guide for their thoughtful contributions is in contrast to the group-think that often results from focus group (or “nominal group technique”) consensus (Van de Ven and Delbecq 1974). An economical hallmark of Delphi studies is their reduction of the need for panelists to travel to participate in focus groups. Additional rationales against employing focus groups for Delphi studies are consistent with individual contributions to the research.

The mythological reference to oracles in the term “Delphi” stems from the importance of gathering comments about a field from a small number of scholarly experts in unique positions. The process of Delphi studies is (1) judgmental input from a modest number of invited participants (commonly ten to eighteen) and (2) responses to one to three rounds of questionnaires over a period of six weeks to six months. Okoli and Pawlowski provide a table of examples of studies that trace the evolution of the method: “Forecasting and issue identification/prioritization represent one type of application of the method. Concept/framework development designs typically involve a two-step process beginning with identification/elaboration of a set of concepts followed by classification/taxonomy development” (2004, 16). Four defining characteristics of Delphi studies include anonymity of responses, which protects privacy throughout the process; iteration, which allows panelists to change or adjust their responses privately if desired; controlled feedback of the consensus of the group, and possibly additional information, having heard equally from all participants; and aggregation of the group response, which takes the shape of a final judgment based on equitable input from all panelists (Rowe and Wright 1999, 354).

The specific strengths of the Delphi method as the research technique chosen for this study are highlighted by two renowned research teams in this arena: by Linstone and Turoff, who used the Delphi method to tackle a “problem that does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit from subjective judgments on a collective basis” (1975, 275); and by Van de Ven and Delbecq, who recognize that without the use of focus groups, the “isolation of the participants facilitated a freedom from conformity pressures” (1974, 619). Pollard and Pollard take the role of the participant one step further in their claim that “an additional perceived benefit of using the Delphi is the belief that the writing process enables participants to thoroughly deliberate and reflect upon all aspects of the problem. The result is the participants’ submission of precise, deliberate ideas” (2004, 147). While the Delphi method lent itself to the initiation of the conversation started by this study, we anticipate that future studies may take different research paths to deepen this discourse.

Traditional Delphi-based studies are organized in the following fashion:

1. A panel of experts is identified.
2. The panel members receive information describing the objective and procedures of the study.
3. The panelists agree to participate.
4. Each panelist who agrees to participate is sent the initial inquiry.
5. The results of the initial inquiry are summarized and sent to each participating panelist.
6. Panelists are invited to respond “in light of the information generated by the collective response to round 1.”
7. The process is repeated based on consensus or the acceptable level of agreement determined by the researchers.
8. The inquiry is terminated and the procedure and the results are documented including rationale for agreement or disagreement. (Crance 1987, 2)

## Participants

Delphi panelists are required to contribute their opinions in response to specific queries within a short period of time. While subject selection is considered a critical step in the Delphi process, there is little in the way of standards for the selection process. Since “expert” is defined within a

discipline, selection is determined by researchers as appropriate within the context of the query and the perceived ability of the participants to respond with vision. Researchers use their discretion to identify appropriate participants for a particular study; this judgment may vary within a field because of the type of information researchers intend to elicit. Commonly chosen panelists across disciplines include positional leaders, authors of publication in the literature, and those who might have direct contact with the issue under investigation (Hsu and Sanford 2007).

Invited Delphi panelists for this study include members of the editorial boards of *Knowledge Quest*, *Library Media Connection*, *School Library Monthly*, *School Library Media Research*, and *Teacher Librarian*, all journals in the school library field, with select academic scholars and association leaders—a total of 63 invited participants. We considered this selection suitable to this study because it encompassed leaders in the field who regularly use their scholarly and professional judgment in editorial decisions to share their expert views on a wide range of school librarianship topics. They determine annual themes for the journals and develop column and feature topics that are timely and critical to the advancement of the school library field. The editorials boards represent both school library scholars and accomplished practitioners from across the country.

We estimated that one-half of the 63 invited Delphi panelists would be willing to participate because of the timely nature of the study and because participant fatigue would likely continue through the subsequent rounds. This strategy was a backward design with the intent of having approximately 15 panelists participate throughout the entire study, the average number of Delphi panelists as identified by Ludwig in 1997. We informed the participants (via the informed consent form; see **Appendix A**) that the Delphi approach asks experts to respond to a single query and subsequently contribute on the basis of the initial responses. They were also informed that participation was intentionally individual and that panelists would be asked for independent thought. Since all communication would be via e-mail, participants would not need to weigh cost or travel considerations.

Delphi studies tend to have a high degree of participation because of the convenience and typically brief time commitment. Indeed, of the original 63 invited panelists (including all the editorial members, some of whom are involved in the publishing field rather than school librarianship), 35 (55 percent) responded with interest and 33 (52 percent) participated through round 1. Round 2 questions were sent to the 33 panelists who had responded affirmatively to round 1, with a return of 17 (52 percent). Round 3 was sent to the 33 panelists who responded affirmatively to round 1, with a return of 21 (64 percent), which exceeded the intended size for the final panel by 6 participants. See **Appendix B** for a list of participants.

## Research Design and Timeline

This Delphi study sought to identify professional dispositions of school librarians. The data was gathered, collated, and analyzed for consensus, and additional requests for response may be forthcoming based on the findings. Participants were informed that templates would be provided as fill-in forms.

We informed the panelists that the first query (round 1) would consist of a request to identify and briefly substantiate five dispositions (100-word maximum each). Traditionally in Delphi studies, the number of rounds—or “iterations”—depends both on the consensus of the responses and the degree to which the researchers are seeking consensus from the study (Hsu and Sanford 2007).

## Timeline

- July 27, 2009: Managing editors were informed of the upcoming invitation to their editorial board members ( **Appendix C** )
- September 14, 2009: Invitation—requested reply by October 1 ( **Appendix D** )
- October 12, 2009: Round 1—requested reply by November 19 ( **Appendix E** )
- November 30, 2009: Round 2—requested reply by December 11 ( **Appendix F** )
- December 14, 2009: Round 3—requested reply by December 31 ( **Appendix G** )

## Results

### Round 1

On October 12, 2009, we asked our panelists to identify five key professional dispositions of school librarians. This request was described as forecasting a vision rather than reporting on the panelists' perception of the current reality within the practice of school librarianship (see **Appendix B**). The descriptions should have clarified what an administrator would observe in a school librarian demonstrating that disposition in action.

See **Table 1** for a listing and description of responses.

**Table 1. Round 1—Identification of Five Key Professional Dispositions by Respondents (N=33)**

Disposition	Consensus (%)	Descriptors of Disposition
Teaching	85	Best practices used to measure learning, evidence-based practices, guided inquiry, student-centered differentiated instruction
Collaborating	61	Team-builder, central part of job, crosses boundaries, builds partnerships, brings people and ideas together
Leading	55	Moves vision forward, leads by modeling, visionary activist, innovator, leading force in school, library as center of learning
Lifelong Learning	55	Staying at forefront and on trends, professionally engaged, love of learning, "love of the hunt," model learning behaviors
Creative Thinking	45	Intellectual curiosity, sees opportunities where others see problems, open and curious, visionary thinker, big picture
Empathy	42	Compassion, honors diversity, kindness, open-mindedness, listens to all points of view, learning experiences for all
Critical Thinking	39	Analytical, metacognitive, strategic, innovative, reflective, deep thinking, delves into new ideas, initiator
Professional	30	Stewardship, clear goals and action planning, people-centric service role, high quality of work, professional demeanor
Ethical	24	Equity of access, models information use that respects intellectual property rights, defends and committed to intellectual freedom
Advocacy	21	Communication, positive, inherently optimistic, motivator,

		promotes, uses avenues that yield best results, involved, “big picture”
Reading	15	Commitment to power of literacy, loves reading for sake of reading, supports reading strategies

*Note: Round 1 respondents ( N = 33) identified five dispositions and provided descriptors for each disposition. The descriptors represent the variety of keywords used to identify individual dispositions.*

## Round 2

On November 30, 2009, we offered our panelists an opportunity to respond to the dispositions that had been identified in round 1. The dispositions were listed in descending order by the number of responses. We created three sets of dispositions grouped by number of responses. The smaller sets make the information more manageable for comparison rather than keeping the eleven dispositions as one large group, as Miller (1956) discusses in his article about “chunking.”

See **Table 2** for panelist reactions to the dispositions identified by their fellow panelists.

**Table 2. Round 2—Reactions to Identification of Dispositions by Respondents in Round 1 (N=17)**

Disposition Set	Dispositions	Representative Reactions to Dispositions Identified in Round 1
Set 1	Teaching/ Collaborating/ Leading/ Lifelong Learning	Exciting finding. Consistent with all of the meta-analyses of educational research that looks at “effects” on student achievement.
		My question is—what are the dispositions of a librarian in a teacher role, in a collaborator role, etc., that are key to success?
		What I call this set, collaborator, leader, lifelong learner, all go together and paint a picture of what the school librarian of the future must be.
		The placement of “leader” is because you queried leaders? Leader—leading what? Leading who? Little evidence of instructional leadership.
		I am not surprised by leader, teacher, collaborator, or lifelong learner being at the top of the list.
		And where does a collaborator get the ideas from which to lead? Lifelong learning.
Set 2	Creative Thinking/ Empathy/ Critical Thinking	We need to create environments where children have the space and the (emotional, intellectual, social) safety to explore their own ideas about what books, digital objects, connections, and creative expression can offer them. We need to create a space in the school that is not an extension of or add on to the classroom, but a space unique in itself. Empathy trumps ethical . . .
		The evidence that . . . “Creative thinking” ranks relatively high is also testament to our mission as a “whole curriculum

		<p>implementation specialist” (i.e., the need to develop approaches and strategies that often transcend subjects and disciplines).</p> <p>Creative thinking about what? Does this category include getting around the barriers of the organization to deliver services beyond traditional expectations? The same with critical thinking. Critical thinking about what? Do they think it is something to instill in learners or to use in their own lives?</p> <p>Creative thinking, empathy, and critical thinking are true dispositions, and I think this is the heart of what you are developing here. It is interesting that empathy pops up here. I agree completely, but the librarian with true caring and passion for the good of children is so important, and is sometimes rare.</p>
Set 3	Professionalism/ Ethical/ Advocacy/ Reading	<p>I would argue, though, that ethical dispositions are perhaps more what we need, so that librarians do not just follow the rules literally, but that they do so with a moral purpose, believing that it is truly wrong to steal information, to spy on students or teachers, and to not pass on information to others. This does not mean acting as the copyright czar, but rather as a model for ethical behavior in a modern age.</p> <p>It is disconcerting to see that Advocate is so low on the count.</p> <p>One area of concern, however, is the relatively low ranking of our “Advocate” disposition.</p> <p>Far too much hollow advocacy, and far too little evidence.</p> <p>I'm fascinated that reading comes up slow low and cheered that teaching and creative thinking come up so high.</p> <p>The shocker is that Literacy/Reading came in last. What does it say about a profession that is overwhelming identified—both inside and outside the profession—by literacy and reading yet mentions it only at the very end of the list?</p> <p>Literacy/Reading: Surprisingly low.</p> <p>Literacy/reading isn't even a role, let alone a disposition.</p>

*Note: Panelists were invited to share any quick reactions or thoughtful reflections based on round 1 results. We assumed that a lack of response to round 2 implied that the panelist chose to offer no comments at that time (but would continue to be included in the study as it progressed).*

### Round 3

On December 14, 2009, we sent the panelists the identified dispositions in alphabetical order along with several representative descriptors replicated verbatim from the round 1 replies. In this third and final query, panelists were given three invitations to engage with the data. Panelists were told to feel free to respond to one, two, or all three invitations:

1. Order the dispositions identified in round 1 in descending order from critically important to lesser importance; and/or
2. Combine two or three like dispositions that you think belong together as one; and/or
3. Change the term used to identify the disposition.

For further clarification of the Delphi Study design regarding the role of the panelists and professional dispositions, the following statements were included in round 3: “Panelists identify what should be—not what is; seek to identify the ideal, do not report on our reality” and “Dispositions are not roles nor are they personality traits; while held internally, dispositions are outwardly manifested by observable behaviors.”

See **Table 3** for the round 3 ordering of dispositions.

**Table 3. Round 3—Ordering of Dispositions from Critically Important to Least Important (N=21)**

Dispositions	Points	Suggestions on Combining Dispositions	Renaming Dispositions
Critical Thinking	60	I would combine Creative and Critical Thinking and name the category Problem Solving	Combine with Creative Thinking
Creative Thinking	55	This is at the top of Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives	Combine with Critical Thinking to make Problem Solving
Teaching	55	Combine Collaborating, Teaching, and Reading	Instructional Partner
Leading	50	—	—
Collaborating	40	Combine Collaborating with Empathy because each requires the other to be relevant to school librarianship	Teaching and Collaborating
Lifelong Learning	36	Combine with Creative and Critical Thinking; also contains parts of Professionalism	—
Reading	25	Combine Teaching and Reading	Multiple Literacies
Professional	22	Combine with parts of Lifelong Learning	—
Ethical	19	Combine Ethical and leading	Ethical Stance
Empathy	18	Consider eliminating	—
Advocacy	18	Combine with Leading	Old-fashioned term

*Note: In Round 3 panelists (N=21) ordered the dispositions from most to least important as well as provided input regarding combining and renaming dispositions. A reverse point scale was developed that weighted the dispositions 1–11 so that the dispositions with the highest number of points were ranked as the highest. Comments suggest that panelists struggled with semantics. For instance, one panelist who eliminated Empathy wrote, “It just didn’t fit. I think it is a personality trait.” However, the notion of care is identified by many scholars as the core disposition of teachers (Bernard, 2004; Hurst, 2005; Noddings, 2005; Smith & Emigh, 2005).*

## Discussion

The impetus for this study was the publication of AASL's *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* complete with dispositions in action for the student learner. There was an implied imperative that practicing educators were to provide the requisite modeling of student-learning dispositions, which is borne out in the teacher education professional literature (Katz and Rath 1986; Katz 1993; Mevarech 1995; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005; Smith, Skarbek, and Hurst 2005; Sockett 2006). However, we uncovered studies of professional dispositions of classroom teachers based on standards only, as described in the introduction to this article. It became clear that initial studies needed to be conducted in school librarianship; there had been no research detected or published studies found, no indication that professional dispositions were identified, were discussed in school librarian preparatory programs, were topics of professional development, or were included in professional evaluations by administrators.

Disposition is a complex concept and one that does not lend itself easily to either definition or identification. The paradox of a professional field that dwells comfortably in inquiry but appreciates clear delineations of fact from opinion was made evident by numerous panelist responses. The Delphi study described above could be considered a problem-based learning experience, one that seemed ill defined and messy to some participants. This assignment for the panelists was not a "bird unit" (Loertscher, Koechlin, and Zwaan 2005) to be sure. And to add yet another layer of complexity, this study was born of the affective domain rather than the cognitive. This issue is usually discussed in more distant terms, such as "climate" and "learning environment," rather than in personal terms, and that might strike some too close to home knowing that assessment and evaluation cannot be far behind.

Despite the coupling of the relatively unfamiliar and decidedly complex concept of dispositions and the open-ended qualitative research design of the Delphi study, results were found to (1) indicate a vision for professional dispositions of school librarians recognized predominantly for their quality teaching but from a distinctly school library perspective, (2) provoke a range of emotional responses from dedicated leaders of the field, and (3) highlight the critical importance of grappling with the identified schism between reality and the vision of professional dispositions of school librarians as documented by this study. Evaluation and assessment are inevitable in our accountability-laden educational system, and if we do not identify our own vision of school librarian dispositions, we run the very real risk that they will be identified for us. This motivational message was not lost on the thoughtful panelists of this study and likely convinced many to participate despite the provocative nature of the inquiry.

*1. Results indicate a vision for professional dispositions of school librarians recognized predominantly for their quality teaching but from a distinctly school library perspective.*

Panelists identified professional dispositions that fall into the following three categories: (1) holistic, (2) transformative, and (3) inquiry. Taking the school library as a context, "holistic" is the foundational category. These dispositions engage the school as a learning ecosystem, with the school library as a communal space for building knowledge societies. Envisioned dispositions encompass the school library writ large, both the physical environment and the twenty-first-century networking environments. It has a societal context that provides for a learning environment where inquiry reigns, access is universal, and minds meet to construct new understandings. School librarians have a unique position as an instructional partner who integrates learning through all curricula and engages with students throughout their tenure in a

school; in highly mobile school populations that might be just one or two years, but it could add up to four (secondary school), nine (kindergarten through eighth grade) or thirteen years in consolidated school districts (kindergarten through twelfth grade).

This longitudinal relationship with both the student and the curriculum establishes a fundamental engagement shared by each student as he or she journeys through the school. Building on this foundation of a holistic context, the second category is “transformative of intellectual character.” Here we focus on our learners in a developmental approach. This teaching philosophy recognizes that the school librarian is a constant in the learning environment of the student over time, unlike the classroom teacher who knows a learner for approximately 185 days throughout one school year. The school librarian not only focuses on integrating content in the curriculum but also focuses on the learner, on guiding and influencing an openness to new ideas and ways of making meaning, of critical and creative thinking, of building on the knowledge of the student as learner throughout each developmental stage. Here the library becomes a way of learning rather than a physical or virtual space—it becomes embedded in the life of student’s mind as the student has access over time to changing resources depending on discipline and developmentally appropriate resource allocation.

The third category of professional dispositions of school librarians might appear to be the most familiar—“the inquiry stance.” The inquiry stance makes the universe of the school librarian applied and pragmatic, and it feeds the program’s actualization. Panelists discuss inquiry as a common thread woven through the majority of the dispositions identified. In each case there was an immediacy brought to the demonstration of understanding that accompanies constructivist knowledge-building.

Panelists identified dispositions that focus on change agency in the practice of teaching and learning. While the identification of teaching was both predominant and problematic, it spoke to the overwhelming response that in one way or another, it is all about teaching; if only we could get our ideas sorted out and identify the distinction that we have from our classroom-teacher counterparts. We engage with our learners in a holistic, communal, and societal context in which care and equity are symptoms of our respect for each student. We build intellectual character over time through modeling, guiding, and influencing learning through understanding. We share the journey with our young charges throughout their learning experiences in the school and throughout their authentic learning that reaches their local and global communities. We employ instructional strategies, techniques, skills, and applied best practices to bring focus to an inquiry stance that envelops both deep thinking and proven skill sets that create learners rather than the learned.

*2. Results were found to provoke a range of emotional responses from dedicated leaders of the field.*

The subject of this study is one that appears to be unexplored in school librarianship. Best practices are accepted even though they are rarely evidence-based, student learning is our worthy goal, and new iterations of visionary outcomes demonstrate remarkable contributions by school librarian scholars and leaders. The publication of the 2007 AASL *Standards* shone a light on student-learning dispositions and caused the field to turn the mirror on itself. There was a fair amount of cognitive dissonance with the complexity of the concept of dispositions, as indicated by this study’s round 2 results (see **Table 2** on page 9). There was an understanding that

responses were individual and should come from the panelist's professional, tacit knowledge rather than from research. The Delphi method "is a group decision mechanism requiring qualified experts who have deep understanding of the issues" (Okoli and Pawlowski 2004, 20), but a tenuous grasp of the concept of dispositions caused panelists to be wary of claiming unfamiliar terms to describe their understandings—a hard peg in a fuzzy hole. And finally, experts in this field are unaccustomed to formalizing a vision based on the affective domain. This discomfort may have added to frustration with participating in this study. We were careful to report results as they were received; however, panelists seemed to grant ownership to us rather than to their fellow panelists (see comments below including "your study," "you placed," and "your list"). The round 1 results garnered a vast range of responses, including the following samples:

- "I am very surprised at the results of the first round of your Delphi study."
- "I find this very discouraging."
- "The responses and categories in which you placed them were quite predictable."
- "I was a bit surprised at the top dispositions on your list."
- "Exciting finding—consistent with all the meta-analyses of educational research."

Indeed, frustration with this process of query (as in the process of identifying dispositions) is identified by Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari:

*The stages of exploration and formulation are usually an unpleasant surprise for students, and sometimes for teachers and librarians as well. Too often they expect to move directly from selecting the general topic for investigation to gathering and collecting information for completing the assignment. These studies show that the exploration and formulation stages are difficult and confusing for many students. They are encountering lots of new ideas that often conflict with what they already know and seem incompatible with each other . . . however, it is during exploration that the most significant learning takes place in the inquiry process. (2007, 17)*

3. Results highlight the critical importance of grappling with the identified schism between reality and the vision of professional dispositions of school librarians as documented by this study.

Participation by the panelists required visionary thinking, not about what experience has shown to be our professional dispositions, but about what the panelists forecast to be professional dispositions of school librarians. In round 3, we reminded panelists that they should "identify what should be—not what is; seek to identify the ideal, do not report on our reality." Naturally, there are no wrong answers and no right answers, there are only responses gathered from recognized experts in the field who are dedicated, visionary, and accustomed to providing profoundly valuable and selfless service to the profession. Additionally, the Delphi method requires that panelists be independent in their responses and respond to inquiries individually. These factors illuminated diverse thinking across the field, both geographically and creatively. Some responses were grounded in the past and present, others were flung far afield and remain as outliers. Nevertheless, there seems to be a sinking feeling that the reality of the field in 2010 is substantively lacking in comparison to the visionary thinking demonstrated by the panelists. As stated by one panelist:

*I am thrilled to see “teacher” out by a wide margin. I did some action research earlier this fall and the librarians who responded didn’t see themselves as teachers at all. Your responders obviously see it differently.*

This realization by the study participants is an unexpected outcome that will hopefully be sufficient to motivate school library educators and professional development providers to implement necessary changes in school librarianship curriculum. Regardless of the particular sentiment of any given panelist, there is a distinctly heightened consciousness of the need for school librarians to identify their own professional dispositions as a compass for their professional education programs and professional development.

## Limitations of the Study

Have a conversation about dispositions, and one major limitation of the study will emerge. We provided panelists with a definition of dispositions from NCATE, but that definition is not satisfactorily descriptive. This limitation is grounded in the historically challenging attempt to encapsulate the concept of dispositions into a neat and tidy concept. A limitation of any study of the concept of dispositions is the difficulty of absolutely defining the term. As one panelist commented, “the definition of a disposition is not sufficiently clarified.” While the concept of dispositions is complex, we believed that the school library scholars who chose to participate would give this topic their best effort. We hoped that this study will serve as a starting point for further research, no more and no less.

A Delphi study requests opinions of leaders in a field to forecast their views on a future that they alone envision on the basis of their substantive professional experience, background, and education. In this method, experts typically “generate ideas, gain consensus, and identify divergence of opinions about a specific topic” (Dimmitt et al. 2005, 216). The strength of the forecast is conversely a limitation of the study—it is only opinion and conjecture of a panel of experts that is gleaned from their perspectives, in this case, on the future of school librarianship.

Editorial board members tend to have been active in school librarianship for a significant period of time. The study panelists represent a cross-section of U.S. editorial board members, building practitioners, and university faculty engaged in school librarian education. By virtue of this expert panel, educators outside of school librarianship, including educational administrators, did not participate in the study. Also, those practitioners new to the field of school librarianship were not included in the study. The focused approach to selecting the panelists was exclusive rather than inclusive.

There is the inherent limitation of asking a busy person to do yet one more thing. While it is understood that busy people accomplish much, and every invitee is a “busy” person, timing does matter. This research project was introduced in July, invitations were sent in September, and completed in December. Three of the invitees (5 percent) claimed that the timing was problematic for them. This is a consideration for future studies that invite participation by those engaged in the academic calendar.

## Implications for Research Results

One resonating finding of this study is the need to influence school library education—both preservice and continuing—to develop professional dispositions of school librarians. Experimenting with the topic through regional, national, and international conference sessions, we are finding that scenarios significantly affect the discussion of dispositions. The design and projected implementation of signature pedagogies for teaching future school librarians is a desired outcome for research results.

A logical future step is the development of valid and reliable assessments. Proposed assessments might include those used in preservice graduate preparation programs for intake at the time of admissions, for a benchmark at a midpoint during a program, and as a summative assessment. These assessments may be both self- and advisor-assessed. Additionally, the same points of ongoing assessment might be developed for building-level practicing school librarians.

Finally, research outcomes will be generative because the panelists who participated in this study are all accomplished providers of professional development, writing, presenting, and forward thinking for the field of school librarianship. While the Delphi method requires individual efforts and independent thought, the collaborative nature of the research results will empower a range of outcomes to move the field forward and close the gap between the reality and the vision.

## Implications for Future Research

Our panelists did not hesitate to offer their recommendations for future research, as evidenced by the following comment: “Your next study would be to get a school librarian to describe his or her dispositions and then see if the principal, teacher, and students recognize any of them.” Studies might be conducted to compare the current curriculum in graduate school preparation programs to the teaching of identified professional dispositions forecast by the Delphi panelists. There is also an interest in the comparison to international school librarianship.

The Delphi method might be used to identify dispositions within the categories explored through this research. While many descriptors were used to define each disposition, panelists expressed the importance of further clarity after responding to round 2 (see **Table 2** on page 9). Each round of this study lends itself to deeper inquiry. And as with any study of professionals, accepted practices and expectations change over time, and this study might be replicated as a Delphi study at future dates.

## Conclusion

This research project sought to investigate the identification of professional dispositions of school librarians by soliciting input from editorial board members of the leading professional journals in the field in the United States. We selected the Delphi method because we determined that it would best fit this research project investigation. Delphi study panelists independently identified professional dispositions and described their terminology (**Table 1** on page 8); commented on eleven prominent dispositions that received the most consensus of responses (**Table 2** on page 9); and ranked and combined categories of dispositions (**Table 3** on page 11). The results of this study provide a research-based foundation for designing and implementing signature pedagogies for use in school library education, appropriate assessment measures for both school library education and practicing school librarians, and for the discussion of professional dispositions of school librarians.

In addition to identifying dispositions and the broader context within which they are recognized, this study illuminated the emotional response to investigating in the affective domain. Clearly this research study struck a chord with the participating panelists, as illustrated by the following comment:

*I printed your results and tacked them to the wall of my office. For the last two days I have looked at that list repeatedly and considered it with some shock.*

The exploration each panelist launched multiplied the impact of this study of professional dispositions and broadened the results to initiate a conversation that has only just begun. As we continue to mine the data to design appropriate pedagogies in school librarian preparation programs and assessments (intake for graduate programs, preservice, and position evaluation), we invite our researcher colleagues to courageously build on this study to further crystallize a robust vision of school librarianship.

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## Appendix A. Informed Consent, September 14, 2009

### Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians

#### Informed Consent–Participant Form

I understand that I have been invited to participate in a research project conducted by Jami Jones, Assistant Professor of Library Science at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina and Gail Bush, Professor, Reading and Language, National-Louis University, Skokie, Illinois faculty from September 14, 2009 through December 1, 2009. The study “Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians” seeks to identify professional dispositions of school librarians. Information from this study will be used to understand those dispositions that the leaders of our field identify as significant.

I understand that I’ve been invited to participate in a study that uses the “Delphi” approach, which engages experts in responding to a single query and subsequent contribution based on initial responses.

I understand that all participation will occur through e-mail, and that the researchers Dr. Jones and Dr. Bush will gather, collate, and analyze the data for consensus and make one additional request for response based on their findings. Templates will be provided as fill-in forms.

I understand that the first query will be e-mailed to me on October 12, 2009 and will consist of one question with a request for five answers that will include brief substantiation (100-word maximum each). The first query will be e-mailed back to the researchers by October 23, 2009, and will take approximately one to two hours to complete.

I understand that the second query will consist of two requests for prioritizing a list that will be supplied to me. The second query will be e-mailed to me on November 16, 2009. It will be e-mailed back to the researchers by November 25, 2009, and will take approximately one-half hour to complete.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time without any penalty or bias.

I understand there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to practitioners, school administrators, school library faculty, and researchers.

To ensure confidentiality, Dr. Jones and Dr. Bush will maintain all data in a confidential manner and that this data will not be shared.

I understand that the results of this study may be published or presented at educational conferences, but my identity will in no way be revealed.

I understand that if I choose, my name will be included as a Delphi study panelist in a list of panelists but will not be directly linked to my responses. Therefore anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

I understand I will receive results of the study.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researchers.

I give consent to participate in this research study and for my name to be included as a Delphi study panelist in a list of panelists.

_____	_____
Participant's Name (Please Print)	Date
_____	_____
Participant's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

I give consent to participate in this research study only. I do not want my name to be included as a Delphi study panelist in a list of panelists.

_____	_____
Participant's Name (Please Print)	Date
_____	_____
Participant's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

## Appendix B. Delphi Study Panel Participants

Debbie Abilock, *Knowledge Quest*  
 Thomas H. Adamich, *Knowledge Quest*  
 Susan Ballard, *Teacher Librarian*

Cassandra Barnett, *AASL President*  
 Juanita Warren Buddy, *School Library Monthly*  
 Sharon Coatney, *School Library Monthly*  
 Rosemary Chance, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Sherry Crow, *School Library Media Research*  
 Gail K. Dickinson, *Library Media Connection*  
 Jean Donham, *School Library Media Research*  
 Nancy Everhart, *Knowledge Quest*  
 Lesley Farmer, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Michele Farquharson, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Kristin Fontichiaro, *School Library Monthly*  
 Carrie Gardner, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Carol Gordon, *Knowledge Quest*  
 Violet H. Harada, *School Library Monthly*  
 Carl A. Harvey II, *School Library Monthly*  
 Sara Kelly Johns, *Knowledge Quest*  
 Liz Kerr, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Erlene Bishop Kileen, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Deborah D. Levitov, *School Library Monthly*  
 David V. Loertscher, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Betty Marcoux, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Marcia Mardis, *School Library Media Research*  
 Ann Martin, *Knowledge Quest*  
 Joy McGregor, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Judi Moreillon, *School Library Monthly*  
 Anne Perrault, *School Library Media Research*  
 Judith Repman, *Library Media Connection*  
 Barbara K. Stripling, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Ross Todd, *School Libraries Worldwide*  
 Joyce Valenza, *School Library Journal*  
 Barbara Weathers, *Teacher Librarian*  
 Blanche Woolls, *School Library Monthly*

## Appendix C. Introductory Letter to Editors, July 27, 2009

Hello Editors,

We are embarking on a Delphi study to identify professional dispositions of school librarians. As our “panelists” we are planning to contact the members of the editorial/advisory boards of the five journals in our field, including *Knowledge Quest*, *LMC*, *School Library Media Activities Monthly*, *School Library Media Research*, and *Teacher Librarian*. Our institutional review board proposals are in process at this time. We will, of course, include you and your associate editors in our panel of experts.

An invitation will be sent to each panelist in September that begins, “You are invited to participate in a Delphi study titled “Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians” by Jami Jones and Gail Bush that seeks to identify professional dispositions of school librarians.

We are inviting all members of the editorial boards of five journals in the school library field to participate. This research methodology is suitable to this study as we are inviting key leaders in our field who regularly use their scholarly and professional judgment in editorial decisions to share their expert views on this particular dynamic topic. The Delphi approach engages experts in responding to a single query and subsequent contribution based on initial responses. All participation will occur through e-mail; our contact with you, the ‘panel’, is intentionally individual. Panelists are asked for independent thought. The researchers will gather, collate, and analyze the data for consensus and make one additional request for response based on our findings. Templates will be provided as ‘fill-in forms.’”

We are accessing the lists of editorial/advisory board members posted on your websites ( *KQ*— we have your current roster). The total number of panelists to be invited is approximately 55; naturally everyone will decide whether to consent to participate. The invitation will be sent in mid-September and all the data will be gathered by December 2009.

We are very excited about the potential impact of this research. We consider this study to be “Phase 1” as we will seek to recommend signature pedagogies and assessments for evaluation based upon our findings.

This e-mail is meant to be informational and also to request updated editorial/advisory member contact information if necessary (all contact will be conducted through e-mail); you could reply to this e-mail address with updated or additional information regarding the panelists. Please feel free to contact us with any concerns or comments.

Sincerely yours,

Jami Jones, Ph.D.

Gail Bush, Ph.D.

## **Appendix D. Invitation to Delphi Panelists, September 14, 2009**

Dear (Editorial Board Member),

You are invited to participate in a Delphi study titled “Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians” by Jami Jones and Gail Bush that seeks to identify professional dispositions of school librarians. We are inviting all members of the editorial boards of five journals in the school library field to participate. This research method is suitable to this study as we are inviting key leaders in our field who regularly use their scholarly and professional judgment in editorial decisions to share their expert views on this particular dynamic topic.

The Delphi approach engages experts in responding to a single query and subsequent contribution based on initial responses. All participation will occur through e-mail; our contact with you, the “panel,” is intentionally individual. Panelists are asked for independent thought. The researchers will gather, collate, and analyze the data for consensus and make one additional request for response based on our findings. Templates will be provided as fill-in forms.

The first query will consist of one question with a request for five answers that will include brief substantiation (100-word maximum each). Our second query will consist of two requests for prioritizing a list that will be supplied to you.

The first query will be e-mailed to panelists on October 12, 2009. The second query will be e-mailed to panelists on November 16, 2009. For both queries you will have two weeks to respond to our requests for contributions. The Delphi study will be completed by December 1, 2009.

The AASL 21st Century Learner Standards have brought dispositions to the forefront of our field—this one aspect of the 2007 Standards represents the most dramatic departure from the 1998 Information Literacy Standards. Our national standards are now guiding our practice to include dispositions for students, which is akin to the cart before the horse of our own professional inquiry. How do we teach learner dispositions through modeling when we have yet to identify our own dispositions?

It is our hope that through your participation we will begin to understand those dispositions that the leaders of our field identify as significant. Editorial and advisory board members who routinely hold sway with the professional literature together form a panel of experts who share both deep understanding and dedication to a shared vision of exemplary school library practice. This impressive group of individuals includes those who engage in service to our profession through a wide range of commitments.

***Please respond to this e-mail by October 2, 2009***, to inform us of your decision (to participate or to not participate) from your preferred e-mail address and include full contact information.

In addition, if you choose to participate in the study, please return the attached consent form either by affixing an electronic signature, faxing, or by mailing a hard copy of your consent form with your signature no later than **October 23, 2009** to Gail Bush at the address listed below. Please note that this form may be returned along with the response to your first query.

We thank you in advance for considering our request for your participation. We feel fortunate to know many of you personally and admire every one of you professionally.

Sincerely yours,

Jami and Gail

NLU Approval 09.11.09

## **Appendix E. Round 1: First Query, October 12, 2009**

### **Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians: A Delphi Study**

Dr. Jami Jones & Dr. Gail Bush

October 12, 2009

## First Query

You are asked to identify five key professional dispositions of school librarians. Please support each identified disposition with a brief description (fewer than 100 words) of what an administrator would observe in an exemplary school librarian demonstrating that disposition in action.

## Appendix F. Round 2: Second Query, November 30, 2009

### Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians: A Delphi Study

Dr. Jami Jones & Dr. Gail Bush

November 30, 2009

#### Second Query

On October 12, 2009, Delphi study panelists were asked to identify five key professional dispositions of school librarians. Clearly this research hit a chord with you, the leaders and scholars in our field; we received almost forty thoughtful responses to our query, well over half of those queried.

When researchers develop a Delphi study, the subsequent participation of the panelists is unknown at the outset. As you can see, the dispositions are in descending order based on number of responses that fell naturally into a prioritized order. Descriptions then clarified what an administrator would observe in a school librarian demonstrating that disposition in action.

You are invited to share any quick reactions or thoughtful reflections based on these results by **December 11, 2009**. If we do not hear from you, we will not send out reminders, we will merely assume that you are going to wait patiently for our final results in the form of a research article, chapter, edited journal issue, assessments, pedagogies, and subsequent book as a follow-up to our prequel, *Tales Out of the School Library: Developing Professional Dispositions* (January 2010, ABC CLIO).

### Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians: A Delphi Stud

28	Teacher
15	Creative Thinking
10	Professional
20	Collaborator
14	Empathy

8	Ethical
18	Leader
13	Critical Thinking
6	Advocate
18	Lifelong Learner
5	Literacy/Reading

A clear definition and robust list of identifiers for each disposition will accompany our research results. We are still working with the data and are fascinated as patterns are emerging within each category. It cannot be overstated that the value of this research resides in its collaborative strength powered by each panelist, each one busier than the next, each one equally generous. We are awed by your heartfelt response to this research and grateful to count you among our colleagues, our friends,

Jami Jones and Gail Bush

NLU Approval 09.11.09

## **Appendix G. Round 3: Third Query, December 14, 2009**

### **Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians: A Delphi Study**

Dr. Jami Jones & Dr. Gail Bush

December 14, 2009

Third (and Final) Query

On October 12, 2009, Delphi study panelists were asked to identify five key professional dispositions of school librarians. Clearly this research hit a chord with you, the leaders and scholars in our field; we received almost forty thoughtful responses to our query, well over half of those queried.

On November 30, 2009, Delphi study panelists were offered another opportunity to respond to the dispositions that had been identified by fellow panelists. The dispositions were listed in descending order based on number of responses. As with many forms of problem-based inquiry, this minimal display of dispositions without identifying descriptors provoked numerous replies. We received almost twenty quick reactions with a wide range of passionate and many conflicting responses.

When researchers develop a Delphi study, the subsequent participation of the panelists is unknown at the outset. Today we are sending you the dispositions along with several representative descriptors that are verbatim from the query 1 replies. In this third and final query, you are given three invitations to engage with the data:

- **Order the dispositions (now listed alphabetically) in descending order from critically important to lesser importance;**
- **Combine like dispositions that you think are just two (or three) that really belong together as one; and/or**
- **Change the name/term used to the disposition.**

Please note:

- *Panelists identify what should be—not what is; seek to identify the ideal, do not report on our reality*
- *Dispositions are not roles nor are they personality traits; while held internally, dispositions are outwardly manifested by observable behaviors*

You are invited to share any or all of the above responses along with any quick reactions or thoughtful reflections based on these results and return that response by **December 31, 2009** (let us know if you would like to respond but need more time into the new year). If we do not hear from you, we will not send out reminders, we will merely assume that you are going to wait patiently for our final results in the form of a research article, chapter, edited journal issue, assessments, pedagogies, and subsequent book as a follow up to our prequel, *Tales Out of the School Library: Developing Professional Dispositions* (January 2010, ABC CLIO).

### **Identifying Professional Dispositions of School Librarians: A Delphi Study**

**Advocacy:** communication, promotes, uses avenues that yield best results, involved, understands big picture, involves partnerships, maintenance of relationships

**Collaborating:** team-builder, brings people and ideas together for greater good, connector, initiates and participates in collaboration, dynamics of working with diverse personalities, power sharer

**Creative Thinking:** intellectual curiosity, sees opportunities where others see problems, seeks novelty, genuine sense of wonder, all new information generates questions, experimentation

**Critical Thinking:** analytical/strategic, reflective inquirer, deep thinking/delves into new ideas, uses research to solve problems, thinking ahead of change, uses information to create new knowledge

**Empathy:** compassion, perceives the world through eyes of others, honors diversity, kindness, open-mindedness, listens to all points of view, concern, learning experiences for all, responsive, each child can learn, inclusive, listening ear, thoughtfulness, accommodation, helpful, models respect, commitment to environment where all students can learn, inclusive

**Ethical:** equity of access, models information use that respects intellectual property rights, defends and committed to intellectual freedom, provides information that meets needs of students without exception, integrity as related to ethics

**Leading:** moves vision forward, lead by modeling, visionary activist, perseverance/integrity/passion/reflective/honesty/innovator/change agent, risk-taking, communicates respect and understanding, exhibit leadership through knowledge of profession

**Lifelong Learning:** openness, staying at forefront and on trends, eagerness to learn, model curiosity, “love of the hunt,” active and involved, seeks best practices

**Professional:** stewardship, logic and organization, clear goals and action planning, people-centric service role, multitasking time management, manager of safe and orderly learning environment

**Reading and Literacy:** commitment to power of literacy, loves reading for sake of reading, values reading and literacy, supports reading strategies, motivation/curiosity/passion for reading and writing, format-neutral

**Teaching:** intellectually stimulates students, uses repertoire of diverse strategies, continually shifting/adjusts to fit learning culture, create safe learning environment, connect school to global community as information specialist

Again, it cannot be overstated that the value of this research resides in its collaborative strength powered by each panelist, each one busier than the next, each one equally generous.

We are awed by your heartfelt response to this research and grateful to count you among our colleagues, our friends,

*We wish you a joyful and fulfilling 2010 and hope to see you soon,*

Jami Jones and Gail Bush

NLU Approval 09.11.09



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