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## Preparing for the Planning Process

### *Vision—where all planning begins...*

What is your personal vision of the ideal library media center program? You may not think that you have a vision or philosophy, but you do. As you work each day in your library media center, you are, consciously or unconsciously, carrying out your vision or philosophy. Think about your vision and consider how it relates to the mission statement in chapter 1 of *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*.

The mission of the library media program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. (p. 6)

This statement may present a different mission than you have considered in the past. No longer do library media programs merely support the curriculum and provide materials to meet students' instructional and personal information needs. These functions are still part of the library media program, but the program described in *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* has moved beyond such a limited scope. School library media specialists must now accept a larger responsibility, one that focuses on helping students and staff effectively use information and ideas.

While the overarching mission of the school library media program is changing in its perspective, in many ways it builds on the traditional focus. We have always been concerned with providing information to students and teachers. The emphasis is shifting from merely locating information to using it effectively. Library media specialists are now concerned with a much broader and more comprehensive program, one that considers information use in its totality.

It is incumbent upon us to be concerned that:

- our students appreciate the value of information in meeting their personal and educational needs
- they develop positive attitudes toward the types of learning that will enable them to continue the learning process beyond their years of formal education
- they do become lifelong learners.

Most of all we must be concerned with how effectively our students use information. We must recognize that information is a means to an end. We must address the thought processes that enable students to:

- identify their information needs
  - develop strategies for locating that information
  - comprehend and evaluate the information they find
  - synthesize that new information
  - integrate that new information with background knowledge
  - use the combination effectively to meet a current need.
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Thus, the major difference between *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* and former national standards or guidelines is the emphasis on the necessity for schools to define an “information curriculum” that can be developed throughout their existing curricula. The information curriculum cannot be isolated or separated from ongoing classroom curricula. Learning how to find and use information effectively is an integral part of every subject taught. Thus, developing an information curriculum must be a shared responsibility of the entire educational community.

As your school’s library media specialist, you must provide the leadership for addressing this responsibility. Conveying this broader view of the library media program as defined by *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* must be communicated throughout the planning process so that it can be clearly reflected in the mission, goals, and objectives of the school’s library media program.

Teachers and administrators must become aware of the importance of information literacy as the means to students’ success in the future; to understand the value and necessity of teaching students the critical and creative thinking skills that enable them to use information; and to acknowledge that the information curriculum is an integral part of the basic instructional program from earliest elementary grades through senior high.

Your leadership in communicating these concepts cannot be overemphasized. You must collaborate closely and continually with teachers and administrators in identifying where information curriculum proficiencies are already included in the curriculum, which proficiencies have not been included, and where and how the information curriculum can be most effectively introduced.

What do you see as the emerging priorities in education in your school? What role does your library media program play in supporting these priorities? What is the program’s most important function? Spend some time thinking about these questions. You must be able to articulate your vision of the changing role of the library media program to others in order to gain their support. Write down some key words or phrases below. These key words or phrases will help you focus on important aspects of your program and will influence your early decisions about the planning process. Your ideas will form the basis of a draft mission statement that you can share with others.

Determining your mission is the first essential step in the planning process. We will provide further guidance to help you develop a draft mission statement in subsequent sections, but it is important to jot down your initial thoughts at this time.

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You have just taken the first step in the planning process. Several more steps are necessary before you are ready to begin working with others in the process, but you must not omit these initial steps. Time spent now putting your own thoughts on paper will enable you to effectively work with others and to rally the support and assistance you need. The following questions serve as your guide through this preliminary phase.

What are your purposes for planning? What do you want to change? to add? to support or maintain? (Write down your ideas.)

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What products do you expect from your planning effort? How will the results be communicated? To which groups?

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Who should be involved in the planning process? Who are the key persons in your school community whose support is essential if your planning is to bring about successful results? Principal, teacher, parent, student, custodian? Write down their names and the reasons that they must be involved.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

If a planning process is to be successful in your school building, support from your principal is *vital*. If your principal's name is not on the list above, add it! You cannot successfully initiate this planning process without the principal's support. If there is a major critic of your program, add this person's name. The planning process offers an excellent opportunity to involve this person in a positive experience and increase his or her understanding of your program. There are other important persons to consider, such as key department chairs, grade-level chairs, resource teachers, special-subject teachers, informal instructional leaders, influential parents, district library media and curriculum staff members, and state department consultants.

Now, look again at your list and decide which individuals should be actively involved on your Planning Committee. Star their names. Do you have a cross section of teachers, administrators, and community representatives? Will these individuals be influential in effecting changes that will result from the planning process? How can you help them understand how this planning process for the library media program will contribute to the overall improvement of the educational program of the school? What strategies must you develop to communicate to each individual your vision of the library media program? How will you convince them of the importance and value of planning? Consider these questions.

Who can help me persuade these essential people to become involved in this planning process?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do I expect from the planning committee members? What will be their specific responsibilities in the planning process?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What criteria will we use to assess the effectiveness of the current library media program?

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How much time will be required for the planning process? for the library staff? for the Planning Committee members? for other members of the school community?

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What resources are required to support the planning effort?

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When will each phase of the planning process be completed?

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How will the activities, results, and recommendations from the planning process be evaluated? by whom? at what point?

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By answering these questions, you have developed the basis for your planning process. You have determined your strategies for communicating the purposes of the planning process, you have outlined your timeline, and you have considered how to persuade the key players to work with you. Together, you and the Planning Committee will oversee the planning process that will result in the library media program that best serves your school—which

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you will always want to refer to as “our,” not “my,” school, “our” library media center, and “our” program. You have now completed the initial steps in the planning process. You have:

- examined your current perceptions of the emerging priorities in education and the changing role of the library media center
  - examined your concept of the library media program in relationship to these changing roles and emerging priorities
  - identified the key concepts of your vision for your program
  - identified your existing library supporters
  - identified potential members of your Planning Committee
  - developed strategies for existing supporters to help you persuade these key players to participate in the planning effort
  - created a feasible timeline for committee tasks and deadlines
  - developed a list of possible criteria needed by the committee to assess the effectiveness of the current program.
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