

Hi, I am Kris McCoy the library media specialist for the Mineral Point Unified School District. Thank you for inviting us here today and letting us speak on the challenges that rural school libraries face. I have been in my position for 5 ½ years and was hired with an emergency license. Not only was I the only applicant, I was the fourth person to begin the job in six years. Along with learning the ins and outs of my new job, I took the courses necessary to complete my initial certification through the UWSSLEC program. After that I finished my Masters in Curriculum & Instruction from Concordia and began additional required coursework through UWM School of Information Studies. Once I receive approval of my ePortfolio, I will have finished the requirements to be a professional level school library media specialist in Wisconsin. I give you this information to show another non-traditional path to becoming a teacher librarian.

In my first year, we began to shift our program focus from the library as a warehouse to that of a collaborative learning center. The ability to make this shift came from being in courses where I was learning current best practices for school libraries. My school libraries became laboratories for my learning and we began the changes needed to become learning centers that are focused on the 21st century needs of our students and staff. In our libraries we provide around the clock access to our digital resources, print materials, instructional guidance, reader advisory, professional resources, access to current technology, space for all kinds of learners, and much more. The decisions we make revolve around improving learning opportunities for students.

In my district, the role of the teacher librarian has evolved. Below is a statement from my superintendent on how it has changed in Mineral Point.

"The library media specialist position has adapted to the position of instructional coaching for teachers attempting to implement 21st century learning and is the hub for instructional best practices. The combination of matching resources to instruction, infusing digital citizenship, pushing out the 4 c's of 21st century learning, and sharing technology resources is instrumental to the progress necessary to personalize learning in preparation for college and career readiness." Luke Francois, Superintendent of Mineral Point Unified School District

The challenge in rural schools is how to do all of this effectively when you spend your time in multiple buildings and you fill multiple roles in each. I am lucky to have a full time assistant in each building to keep the program running when I am in the other building or working collaboratively with teaching staff. Over the last five years we have tried a variety of schedules that involved splitting the time evenly between the

buildings weekly and none of them felt like they were best meeting the learning and instructional needs of our students and staff.

I was asked to join this panel to share with you the library staffing scheduling experiment we are conducting in Mineral Point this year as we strive to provide rigorous learning opportunities for our students during these challenging financial times.

At the end of last year I proposed a plan to change the schedule where I spend 80% of my time at one building each month and rotate buildings every other month to test my belief that each building would benefit from an almost full time teacher librarian without the district making the financial commitment.

The administration at my school agreed to this proposal and asked that I develop a plan for implementing this. Letters went out to staff about the changes, a collaboration planning form was developed, and a presentation was given to middle and high school staff explaining the changes and how they would be implemented.

Now every other month, each school gets my almost full time attention. Although it is still too early to analyze the results, the number of collaborative projects has increased, there is increased interaction time with students, and the needs of each building are better addressed. Another exciting change this year is our new course within our English 9 course called InfoLit where we meet twice a month and focus on developing skills to be effective and ethical users of information. The reality is that over the next few years, our district probably will not be able to afford to hire another teacher librarian so we need to be creative problem solvers in order to make needed instructional changes with the resources we have.

Please continue your support of teacher librarians in schools and the funding of the Common School Fund, BadgerLink, WISCAT, and the CCBC. This funding and resource sharing make it possible for rural schools to provide equitable resources to our students and staff as we work to ensure that our students are prepared for their futures.