

## Unpacking the Baggage of Collaboration: Some Factors to Consider

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As we become school library media specialists (SLMS), we are taught to embrace the roles and responsibilities expressed in *Information Power* (1998). As instructional partners, many of us focus our energies on attempting to build collaborative relationships with teachers. For some, these efforts pay off handsomely; for others, collaboration has become more an elusive grail than an attainable goal.

A number of studies both in Michigan (Drake, 2006; Mardis, 2007; Mardis & Hoffman, 2007) and in other states (e.g., Jones, 1997; McCracken, 2001; Pickard, 1993; Slygh, 2000) documented the gap between role theory and role practice of SLMS found that few SLMS are able to practice an instructional partnering role to a great extent.

Barriers to collaboration may be due to teachers' career stages; SLMS need to understand the types of support they can offer teachers at various points in their careers. The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Hall & Hord, 2006) of teacher development has helped to illustrate the ways in which teachers progress personally and professionally in three stages. In their view, the three stages were:

1. Early career: concern for self image and perceptions of competency;
2. Mid-career: concern for instructional tasks and situations;
3. Late career: concern with instructional impact on students.

SLMS have essential roles to play at each point on a classroom teachers' journey, if the opportunities for collaboration are assessed with savvy.

### Early Career Teachers

Teachers in their first three to four years respond to a number of challenges. During this time, teachers are struggling to establish their classroom routines, a sense of curriculum content and schedule flow, and school culture. This initial period is also the time of great attrition; only 54% of new teachers make it through their first five years (NCTAF, 2002). In fact, this high level of teacher turnover is a pressure on school budgets and may affect consistent school library funding.

Two major factors affect teacher retention: school-based support and training in the selection and use of instructional resources (Darling-Hammond, 2001). SLMS have a tremendous opportunity to establish relationships with young teachers by supporting them with SLMS resource expertise and with the school library media center collection that respect their self-consciousness and reluctance to ask for help.

### Mid-Career Teachers

Teachers in their seventh to 15th years of teaching are characterized as being "mid-career." By this time, teachers are comfortable in their roles in the classroom. Getz (1996) found that as teachers progressed in their careers, their familiarity with the processes of teaching deepened and they tended to become more conservative in their attitudes toward discipline and collaboration, especially with SLMS. The explanation for this shift has been attributed to a lack of contact with the school library due to classroom isolation and the "washing out" of preservice education when teachers have achieved their own mastery of curriculum content and student behavior (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).