2-2014

# School Librarians and the Common Core: How They Can Help Teachers and Students Through the New Standards

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SCHOOL LIBRARIANS AND THE COMMON CORE:
HOW THEY CAN HELP TEACHERS AND STUDENTS THROUGH THE NEW
STANDARDS


by


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A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the Master's Degree, The City University of New York

2014

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.


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**ABSTRACT**

SCHOOL LIBRARIANS AND THE COMMON CORE:
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By

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The author addresses the critical role school libraries play in student academic achievement. He also addresses the role school librarians could play in successfully implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Historically being left out of education reforms such as No Child Left Behind in 2001, school media specialists now have the opportunity to shine and show off their unique skill set in curriculum design, information literacy, and research. In collaborating with teachers to carry out lesson plans focused on the CCSS, school librarians can teach students essential skills such as critical thinking, brainstorming, and writing/reading techniques. In discussing why school librarians are needed to complete the success puzzle, the author looks into various course curricula established at Masters of Library Science programs in the United States to trace the development of their skill set, trainings in literacy and research, and the impact these professionals make on a daily basis. The author also shows how school media specialists make a difference in promoting and teaching literacy in inner city schools, which are highly under resourced. Issues of socioeconomic context, inequality, and illiteracy among inner city students are addressed.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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"Very often after school I would make my way to the library and while away a few hours of browsing through the shelves. This was my introduction to opinions about history, science, the arts, and humanities that my school or parents never taught me. I've had a library card for as long as I can remember and I continue to use my card for much of the research I do for the roles I play."

**Jane Alexander**
**Actress, A History of Us (2003)**

"Libraries have always been my favorite place for quiet time, for study, for writing and reflection. I can't imagine a world without libraries: that would be a sad and dreary world, one without creativity or imagination."

**Laura Valeri**
**Author, Safe in Your Head (2013)**

"As a young person growing up in Hot Springs, Arkansas, I have many fond memories of the time I spent in the Garland County library. As a student in high school and college, my love for learning was fostered and enhanced by all the resources I made use of in the libraries where I studied. Today the library is not only a special place for me but for my family as well."

**Bill Clinton**
**U.S. President, 1993-2001**

## I. Introduction

Libraries hold a special place not only in the hearts of those I have quoted above, but also in mine. I remember a time when Ms. Tepper, my first grade teacher at Public School 115 in Canarsie, Brooklyn, would take her class to the school library down the hall. We would form two lines, one for boys and another for girls, and walk quietly down the second floor hallway to the library. When we arrived at the library, the class would wait in the hallway until the school librarian was ready. When she signaled the class that it was okay to enter, I remember the first thing I saw were shelves of books against the wall and the colorful decorations. The students were asked to sit on a rug and we were given an introduction on how the library worked and proper etiquette while in the room.

After the introduction, I remember the school librarian asked the class to find two books that interested us from the shelves. I had a hard time finding a book, pulling books out at random

that seemed small and had an interesting title. Because English is not my primary language, I had to rely on colors and the words I did know to help me find a book. Still I was unable to find a book that caught my interest.

Ms. Tepper walked over to me and asked if I had found a book yet. I told her in a strong Cantonese-Chinese accent that I was unable to and didn't see anything I liked. Ms. Tepper smiled at me and said, "finding a book is easy but finding a book you'll like is difficult." The school librarian showed me around her wonderful collection of books. She stopped me at a shelf and asked me if I saw anything I liked. I looked through the collection and pulled out a long paperback book entitled *Sayonara, Mrs. Kackleman* by Maira Kalman. The cover of the book with its yellow, greens, and reds were not only exciting to look at but what interested me the most were the Asian woman and man on the cover. They looked somewhat like me. Racially relevant, I took the book and the librarian helped me read it at the table in the room. With each page, I was anxious to know what happened next, asking questions such as what was going to happen next to the kids on their adventures and will they stay in Japan with Mrs. Kackleman. At the end of the story and our return back to our classroom, I could not and would not forget about this wonderful story. I have since purchased the title for my own home library.

The school librarians of my past have helped me greatly through enriching my life with knowledge and intellectual growth. They embedded in me the love for books, an opportunity to gain knowledge and use your imagination to become a part of the story. They taught me how to conduct research using the contents and index sections of a book to find what I needed. In using the Internet, they taught me how to use Boolean search terms such as AND, NOT, and BUT on search engines (Yahoo, AltaVista) to specifically narrow my searches. They also taught me basic computer skills on applications such as Microsoft Word and Excel, essential programs we should

know in writing papers and creating spreadsheets. The school librarians taught me skills that are extremely useful today as a graduate student conducting scholarly research, as a tutor helping students gain literacy skills through reading, and as technology specialist at a library, teaching adults and senior citizens how to use the computer and their applications.

School librarians do much more than provide research, literacy, and technology training. They teach students how to evaluate information through inspection, looking for the source of the document to determine its reliability. School librarians may refer students to use sources from an academic database such as EbscoHost and ProQuest, rather than websites such as Wikipedia, which are written by multiple people and lack reliability.  School librarians also support teachers with their curricula by providing additional resources to complement their lesson plan. School librarians gather books, multimedia such as DVDs and videos, and online resources for teachers to show their students as part of a lesson plan. School librarians empower students to become critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information (American Association of School Librarians, 2009). So why haven't school librarians been included in the guidelines of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? These learning guidelines for teachers to teach and students to learn at each grade level from Kindergarten to the end of high school can be realized more successfully with the participation of school librarians.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the role of school media specialists (school librarian) in the implementation of the CCSS. By looking at academic journals, school library magazines, and online resources for school media specialists, I aim to show the positive impact school media specialists make in schools and their contributions to student and teacher success. With added pressure on teachers, who are already accountable for student success on

standardized tests under No Child Left Behind (2001), and administrators who are counting on their teachers to raise student test scores in order to improve their schools reputation and ranking, schools can use an extra hand on alleviating pressure for all educators in the school. As long as educators have an interest in teaching the skills and content knowledge of the CCSS, they can ultimately be successfully in providing their students with a first class education.

This thesis is composed of 9 sections including the introduction and conclusion. Section II discusses school library cuts across the nation and its impact on students and teachers. Section III discusses the history and language arts standards of the CCSS. I specifically focus on those two areas because they address two important questions: how did the CCSS come about and how can school media specialists lend their expertise in teaching literacy, writing, and critical thinking skills designated in the CCSS. Section IV addresses the skill set and knowledge base of school media specialists developed during library school. School media specialists bring their expertise in collection development, technology and information instruction, and research, to help implement the CCSS into the school's curriculum, including the details of which tools are necessary to successfully carry out the lesson plans associated with the coursework in English Language Arts. By examining four school library media curriculums from universities across the country, we will be able to see where their skills and knowledge came from and how they are connected to the CCSS. Section V discusses the collaborations between teachers and school media specialists and benefits for student learning and professional development. Teachers who are able to develop close networks with school media specialists not only have an opportunity to learn from one another through brainstorming for lesson plans and viewing each other's classroom instruction, but also to develop professionally and instructionally through creative feedback and use of technology. Section VI and VII addresses the need for school librarians in

inner city schools and their positive impact on students. School media specialist can provide a number of services to students and teachers such as teaching classes, mentoring students and teaching literacy and research skills. School media specialists can make a significant difference in inner city schools, raising student achievement and standardized test scores, as well as teaching students new skills and content knowledge that will prepare them for college and the workforce. Section VIII addresses public and school library collaborations such as the MyLibraryNYC initiative and its impact on providing students and teachers with important resources such as books and online databases.

**II. School Library Budgets Cut Across the United States**

School library budgets have been cut all around the United States. According to the American Library Association's yearly *State of America's Libraries Report 2013*, the number of school librarians declined more than any other school staff between 2007 and 2011. During the 2006-2007 school years, there were 54,445 school librarians. With each school year after, there was a downward trend of school librarians. The sharpest decrease occurred during the 2010-2011 school years, dropping to 50,300 school librarians from 52,541. The number of school librarians has continued to decrease since then. This trend will continue unless the U.S. Department of Education and state education agencies recognize the impact of school library closures on administrators, teachers, and students. To demonstrate the need for school libraries and the impact it has on the school community, I use two recent online news articles highlighting the impact of school library closures.

Susan Snyder (2013), a staff writer at the Inquirer, shows the emotional cost of school library closures at two schools in Philadelphia, PA: Central High School and Masterman. Budget cuts forced both principals to cut their staff including school librarians, teachers, and assistant

principals. According to Masterman's principal Marjorie Neff, who was "about to tear up", was uncertain about how the loss of their school library would impact the instructional program at her school. The school librarian, Bernadette Kearney, not only helped students find books and online resources, but also taught them valuable research techniques as well. Ms. Kearney may have worked closely with administrators and teachers to help carry out the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) at Masterman. Timothy Mckenna, Central's principal, also shared similar feelings about the loss of his school media specialist Loretta Burton. According to Mckenna, it was "beyond his control" to keep his librarian due to the limited power he had over the school's budget.

The loss of the school media specialists at both schools affected not only principals, but students and teachers as well. Louis Borda, a Social Studies teacher at Masterman stated "we can't be expected to have a school without a library. I would have reconsidered keeping my kids in the school if I knew it was going to be this bad." This statement highlights the importance of having a school library not only at his school, but at all schools. The school library cannot open without a school media specialist or school staff member present. Since the school library is closed off to students, students will need to find other places during or after school to study or have group discussions. Students will not have a place to go where they feel safe, especially in inner city neighborhoods. Keeping the school library open will make the lives of students and teachers much easier and will continue to provide a service for the school community.

Without school libraries, students will not have access to the books and resources they need to be successful in school. In an article written by Neal J. Riley in the September 10, 2012 edition of the SFGate, he discussed the impact of budget cuts to school libraries in Union City, California. Carla Colburn, a school librarian for 8 years before she went back to teaching English

at James Logan High School, only visits her old library once a day to retrieve books for English Language learners and students who are working on history projects. When she was in the library, she would see about 600 to 1,000 students walking in and out of the library each day. Now that the room is dark and the computers are unused, it has become nothing more than a room in the school.

Blaming much of what happened to the school library on budget cuts, Riley discussed the impact this had on student's loss of essential skills needed to succeed in their first year of college. Pam Oehlman, president of the California School Library Association, said that K-12 school libraries are needed more than ever and that students will be at a "disadvantage their first years of college if they aren't good searchers or database users" (Riley, 2012). Without the school library, students will need to find alternative places to study and do research for projects and group assignments. Students also wouldn't be able to get the same attention they would from school librarians, who could walk them through the research or writing process.

### III. The Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are K-12 educational standards in the English language arts and mathematics, developed to provide students in the United States with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in college and the workforce. The CCSS are "meant to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to help them" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State Officers, 2010). The purpose of having such standards are not only to give teachers and parents a clear understanding of what students need to know, but also to create a unified curriculum. The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State Officers (2010) claim that a national curriculum will ensure that all students,

regardless of where they live, receive a high quality education in preparation for post-secondary school and the workforce. The authors also believe that the implementation of CCSS across the nation will open a national conversation for teachers, administrators, and other education stakeholders regarding their experiences with implementing the standards and how best to improve them to better serve our students.

The CCSS in English language arts and the standards laid out in *The Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (2007), a publication by the American Association of School Librarians, share similar ideas on the skills students ought to develop in school. *The Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (2007) focuses on four major areas: a) critical thinking to gain new knowledge, b) the ability to draw conclusions, make informed decisions, and applying knowledge to different situations, c) sharing knowledge with others as part of a democracy, and d) pursue personal and aesthetic growth. Under each area, there are standards focusing on what are called "skills", disposition to action, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies. Because the CCSS in English languages arts focuses on the skills highlighted in this publication, it is only logical to involve school media specialists in the implementation, instruction, and curriculum design processes at their schools.

***The History of the Common Core State Standards***

The CCSS was not developed the same year it was implemented in 2010. The planning stage of the CCSS began in 1996 at the National Education Summit during a meeting between a group of governors and business leaders around the country. In an effort to lead reforms across the country in order to create a national education curriculum, the governors and business leaders developed an organization called Achieve, an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education

reform organization (Tennessee Department of Education, 2010). Governor Bill Haslam of Tennessee and former governor Phil Bredesen served on the board of directors at Achieve.

The development of the CCSS started with a report entitled "Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts" in 2004. Written by the American Diploma Project (ADP), the researchers of this study found that with 70% of high school students entering college, at least 28% of those students take a remedial math or English class as freshman. A majority of those students in remedial courses were minorities and came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, the researchers found that most college students never attain their degrees, especially those who began with remedial classes as freshmen. As coursework became more difficult and readings more complex, it began to strain students, especially those who did not acquire the necessary skills needed in reading, math, and writing from high school. Other noteworthy findings in this report included the lack of basic skills employers look for in the work force, with 60% of students having poor or fair knowledge of reading and writing skills and the lack of opportunities for students to take Advanced Placement courses, college level classes that can be taken in a variety of subjects in high school.

In July 2008, Achieve began to document the work of multiple school systems around the nation that were preparing their students for college and job readiness. Sixteen early adaptor states, including New Jersey and Tennessee, were examined for their work on developing a career and job readiness curriculum for their states. At the end of 2008, Achieve, NGA, and the Council of Chief State Officers urged states to adopt their education reform standards. In July 2009, the NGA and the Council of Chief State Officers released a draft of the college and career readiness standards for public comment by educators, administrators, and other education

stakeholders. The writing and drafting process continued until June 2010 when the final draft was written for publishing.

President Barack Obama's Race to the Top (RTTT) legislation has the CCSS at the center of its initiative (Boser, 2012). The Race to the Top Fund, a $4.35 billion grant developed in February 2009, was created to encourage and reward states for innovating and reforming their education programs to raise student achievement and close the achievement gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Delaware and Tennessee were among the first two states to win RTTT funding for their states. In 2010, ten more states received RTTT funding including New York and Washington D.C. Although not every state received funding, to date, forty-five states, Washington D.C., four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adapted to the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State Officers, 2010).

***Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts***

The CCSS in English language arts and mathematics were developed with certain criteria in mind (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State Officers, 2010). The eight points of the criteria are:

- The standards are aligned with expectations for college and career readiness
- The standards have to be clear enough for everyone to follow along
- Schools teaching with the standards must be consistent across the border
- The standards must include both the content and the application of knowledge through high order skills
- The need for building upon strengths and lessons of the current state standards in the U.S and internationally
- The standards must be realistic and could be carried out in the classroom
- The standards are updated accordingly to compete with other standards at the internationally level
- The standards must be evidence and research based

In using these criteria, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State Officers (2010) were able to "develop K-12 grade specific standards that define student end of the year expectations and a cumulative progression designed to enable students to meet college and career readiness no later than the end of high school."

The CCSS in English language arts focuses on four main areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Reading is one of the most important skills people develop in their lifetime. It is an important way of communicating thoughts, findings, and stories with others. It is also a way of developing knowledge of the world. As students develop their reading skills, first by starting with simple texts and then working their way up to more complex narratives, they will develop new skills such as critical thinking, making connections, and constructing arguments. All of these skills are emphasized in the CCSS in English language arts and *The Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (2007).

The CCSS in English language arts also focuses on the development of writing skills. The ability to write well not only takes time, but practice as well. Students can work on their writing by plotting their thoughts in a journal or composing sentences to jot down ideas. The ability to plan, revise, edit, and publish texts is emphasized in the standards. Also, in order for students to write coherent and well-developed term papers in college, "research standards are prominently included in this strand, though skills important to research are infused throughout the document" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State Officers, 2010). School media specialists certainly fit in this area as well, able to help students develop research and good writing skills. They can show students how to use research databases, find online resources through search engines like Google, narrow searches by using Boolean terms, and how to read abstracts analytically to determine whether the source will be

useful for their paper. School media specialists can also sit down with students and look over their work, point out grammatical and stylistic issues, and explain how to improve on their writing.

The standards for speaking and listening are aimed to help students acquire adequate oral communication and interpersonal skills. According to those standards, teachers are supposed to provide students with a literary text as a classroom or homework assignment and ask questions about the work the same or following day. Students would respond to questions depending on what the teacher asks for. For example, if a 11th grade teacher asks her students about Voltaire's *Candide* (1984) and their responses to Pangloss's philosophy on why everything happens out of absolute necessity, students can recall what they have read, along with their own personal experiences to develop a meaningful and coherent argument. Questions such as these could also start class conversations in which students not only listen to their classmates, but also have respond to them as well in support or against their statements.

Finally, the CCSS for language arts focuses on the development of written and verbal skills in English. Students are supposed to learn the conventions of English grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, in written work. Students should also learn how to develop proper sentences through the use of subject verb object construction and active-passive voice. The language standards also include the growth of vocabulary, in which students "focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, and their nuances and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State Officers, 2010).

Members of the National Governor's Association and Council of Chief State Officers believe that if students were able to gain the skills highlighted in the four areas above, they

would be college and career ready. According to the authors of the CCSS, students with these skills demonstrate their own independence in learning; able to accept and/or reject ideas through asking questions related to texts and lectures he/she believes are irrelevant, inconsistent, or wrong. They also believe that students will gain sufficient content knowledge in an array of subjects (social studies, science, and technical subjects) as well as become skilled in the use of technology and digital media. Though the idea of success for all students is of course the main goal and the skills highlighted in the English language arts CCSS are important, I believe that the task of getting every child prepared for college and careers is difficult. In addressing what's good and bad about the CCSS, I will point out where the standards are strong, as well as where improvement is needed to make it work.

### *Pros for the Common Core*

Below are the reasons, most often given, for why the Common Core Standards are good and should remain in the education curriculum:

- Advocates of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) like that they are internationally benchmarked (National Governor's Association & the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). This means that the standards set for our students are comparable to other high-ranking countries doing well in educational attainment. With these standards set for students, graduates will have the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in the global economy for good, high paying positions around the world.

- The adoption of the Common Core State Standards will save states money. Before the standards were implemented across the United States, each state had their own standards they used to develop test and teach students (Parents for Public Schools, 2013). Departments of Education across the country can split the cost of standardized test,

allowing for the allocation of funds to other educational needs such as technology and books.

- The Common Core State Standards will also provide teachers with a way to assess their student's performance on test subjects in comparison to other students. Just as New York City has Progress Reports to see how students are doing at each school and how they performed on standardized tests, the Common Core State Standards also compares students from schools similar to others with the same student population in regard to socioeconomic status and race.

- The Common Core State Standards do not dictate what teachers need to teach. The CCSS are just standards that dictate what skills students need to know by the end of the school year. Teachers are free to use their own pedagogies to educate their students. Teachers are also able to use their own resources to complement their lesson plans. Most importantly, teachers will no longer have to teach to the test, a practice used by educators to boost student test scores by teaching how to use the process of elimination on multiple choice questions and constructing short answers for text based inquiries.

### *Cons for the Common Core*

Below are the reasons most frequently given by tea party activists and commentators like Diane Ravitch and Glenn Beck, why the Common Core State Standards should be abandoned:

- Teachers and students will need time to get adjusted to the Common Core State Standards. Teaching the Common Core State Standards will not be an easy task. Teachers will have to complement their current curriculum to fit the standards or the school may need to implement a pre-made curriculum in which teachers are unfamiliar with.

Regardless of which curriculum is used, it will take time for teachers and students to get used to how they have to teach and what is taught.

- The Common Core State Standards may cause a decrease in teacher retention. Teachers may get frustrated and stressed out from the work they will have to do with students to get all students at the same reading and mathematics levels by the end of the year. Teachers may be pressured by the principal or assistant principal to increase test scores among their students, demonstrating that they have learned the standards and can move to the next grade. With teachers accountable for teaching their students, meaning that they will either benefit or suffer depending on how their students do on standardized tests, they may not be able to handle the pressure placed upon them to get the job done.

- Younger children will have to learn at a faster pace if they want to gain the skills listed in the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards do not take into consideration the learning differences among students. Students do not learn at the same rate or in the same way as their peers. Some students need more help than others. If teachers are expected to teach the skills according to a fixed schedule, students will be left behind and may be unable to catch up on future lessons.

- The Common Core State Standards are vague.  The standards are not specific. For example, in the Reading: Literature section of the English Language Arts CCSS for the 9-10 grades, students are expected to "cite strong and through textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text". The determination of strong evidence is determined by the reader and can be any sentence or paragraph in a text he/she feels need to be addressed.

In addition, I would like to include two more reasons, rarely given by the Common Core State Standards:

- Teachers should not be the only educators accountable for student achievement in school. Including the school media specialist in the curriculum development process and in providing instruction to students can help students succeed.

- The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers did not take into account social factors that influence academic achievement. Social factors, such as social context and socioeconomic status, are crucial to our understanding of inequalities that continue to persist within our education system. Both of these factors are positively attributed to academic achievement.

I address these two reasons in this paper. The importance of school media specialists in every school and the role that they play is integral for the success of the Common Core State Standards and for students to be successful in college and in the workforce.

**IV. School Media Programs: What School Librarians Bring to the Table**

An examination of the school media program can provide insight on the skills school librarians know that can help implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). School media specialists take courses on a variety of subjects from research to collection development. Taking such courses give future librarians the skills and knowledge they need to be successful at their jobs. I believe that the content knowledge learned in the school media concentration, along with fieldwork, training, and possibly personal experiences, make school media specialists more than qualified to assist teachers in teaching students the CCSS.

There are very few academic studies about the library science curriculum. Most studies found in academic or professional journals focused on either improving library science programs

or dismantling the information science aspect of library science programs. Information science is an interdisciplinary field concerned with a body of knowledge related to the origination, collection, organization, storage, retrieval, interpretation, transmission, transformation, and utilization of information (Borko, 1968). Gorman (2004) believes that information science is peripheral to library science and needs to be detached from library schools across the country.

Gorman (2004) claims that there are problems with the current library science program, as it is "ailing in the United States, dying in others, and dead in yet others" because of the inclusion of information science. Gorman (2004) believes that information science is taking over the library science curriculum due to the removal of courses such as cataloging and databases. He also makes note that some prestigious research universities in the United States have removed their LIS program because of the integration of information science. In an attempt to bring back "real library science", Gorman (2004) recommends a nationally uniform core curriculum for library students, a faculty knowledgeable of library topics, and a national accreditation from the American Library Association, and greater ethnic diversity in the librarian profession. Though I agree that library science education has changed over time, I disagree with Gorman (2004) on a number of points including the separation of information science, the future of employment for library students, and current library science curriculum.

Twenty-first century librarians have to know how to find and use information to be successful in their roles. Librarians are constantly being sought out in public, school, and academic settings for help on finding resources and materials using books, multimedia, the Internet, and microfilms. If librarians were asked questions about copyright, patent laws, or public domains, they should know how to answer them because of their training in library school. The librarian's ability to answer these questions from students and patrons are based in

the techniques taught in information science. Without these techniques, a librarian is no longer a librarian but rather a "behind the scenes" professional, a position Gorman advocates.

Gorman (2004) believes that it will be difficult for recently graduated LIS students to obtain a job because perspective employers are unaware of the skills and knowledge they obtained in school. I do not agree with Gorman for a number of reasons. First, prospective employers look for more than what students learned in school. According to Susan Adams (2013), a journalist for Forbes magazine, employers look for relevant skills from past work and volunteer experience such as the ability to work on a team, to make decisions and solve problems, and the ability to write and edit reports. Students, regardless of their major, can obtain a job as long as they have the relevant skills to do their work. Employers also look for candidates who will be a good fit, working with patrons or students in a customer friendly environment and having knowledge of the librarian role. Second, if prospective employers are curious of the skills candidates learned, they can examine their transcripts for their coursework and grades. Employers can also ask questions as well to find how much candidates know about a particular topic in library or information science.

In regards to library science curricula, Gorman (2004) states "many of the topics regarded as central to a library education (cataloguing, reference, collection development, etc.) by would-be employers are no longer central to, or even required by, today's LIS curricula". This is not the case at all. The skills learned in reference, collection development, and management courses are still relevant today, as they were several years ago. Without reference, librarians would be unable to find books for patrons and students, as well as answer questions. Without collection development, librarians would not know what books to purchase for their library. Without

management, a library cannot be professionally maintained. I describe below current library school curricula that demonstrate the skills school media specialist bring to their profession.

I looked at curricula from selected colleges and universities around the United States that offer the school media library certification from the library schools ranked by the U.S. News and World Report ([www.usnews.com](www.usnews.com)). In using the list, I selected these four universities: University of Washington, Syracuse University, Drexel University, and the Florida State University. These schools were selected not because of their curricula but because of their ranking. The four curricula were compared for core and elective courses with course descriptions on each college website. Course names, descriptions, the skills learned and their relevance to the CCSS are addressed in this paper.

All four universities offer core courses in information science. Information science is an interdisciplinary field concerned with a body of knowledge related to the origination, collection, organization, storage, retrieval, interpretation, transmission, transformation, and utilization of information (Borko, 1968). Students are required to take a course in information science as a prerequisite before they are allowed to take elective courses. Course titles in information science vary from "The Life Cycle of Information" at the University of Washington to "Research in Information Organizations" at the University of Florida. The course descriptions provided information about the course, as well as the skills and knowledge students are to gain after completion of their coursework. Students learn quantitative and qualitative methods for conducting research in a library setting, how to narrow searches using Boolean terms such as AND, IF, and NOT, and how to organize information using both print and electronic mediums such as databases.

Students in the school library media concentration take courses outside of the Masters in Library Science track. Courses include collection development, children's material and evaluation, young adult materials and evaluation, instructional and training strategies for information professionals and the management of school library programs. By taking these courses, students gain valuable skills and content knowledge they can apply as school media specialists. Students will also be able to apply their skills to help students and teachers learn and teach under the CCSS.

Students taking a course in collection development will be able to select, build, and maintain their library collections. Across all four universities, there are mentions of collection management in the course title. Students in this course learn how to conduct community analysis, plan collections, develop policies for library material usage, select, acquire, and evaluate materials, as well as preserve and publicize library collections. With the skills learned in this class, school media specialists can purchase books that are age appropriate, up to date, and useful in supporting the educational agenda of classroom teachers. They can also develop library circulation policies for teachers and students that would allow them to check out materials for a specified period of time. By conducting a community analysis, school media specialists can identify community needs such as that for resources and materials that will support literacy and learning amongst students.

In addition to learning about collection development, students also learn how to evaluate children's and young adult books. Course titles pertaining to the evaluation of children's and young adult materials include "IST 661 Management of School Libraries" at Syracuse University, "INFO 683 Resources for Children (or INFO 684 for Young Adults)" at Drexel University, "LIS 5512 School Collection Development and Management" at the University of

Florida, and "LIS 565 Children's Materials: Evaluation and Use (or LIS 566 for Young Adults)

at the University of Washington. Students learn how to select materials that will serve

"informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs" (University of Washington, 2013).

Students also learn how to evaluate books and resources, ensuring that they meet the needs and

interests of the youth. School media specialists will not only learn how to evaluate materials

based on genre and age group, but also will be familiar with culturally relevant materials, which

can engage readers of urban or immigrant backgrounds.

In a study conducted by Hughes-Hassell & Pradnya (2006), the researchers found that

leisure reading increased amongst urban teenagers when there were materials that were relatable

to their lives. Magazines geared towards a specific group such as Black Beat, Latina, and Sister

to Sister successfully encourage Black and Latino young adults to read. Non-fiction materials

about celebrities, music, drawing, or video games serve the same purpose. Hughes-Hassell &

Cox (2009) found that the kind of materials that were most effective in building leisure reading

among minority students were fiction books set in urban environments. Such fiction usually has

an African American or Latino main character, a "hood" or major city setting like New York

City, and a theme involving crime, sex, drugs or gangs. Books such as Sister Soulja's *Coldest

Winter Ever* and Omar Tyree's *Flyy Girl* are examples of this type of urban fiction.

Library school students gain experience in developing programs and curricula geared

towards supporting literacy. At Syracuse University, students in the "Literacy through School

Libraries" course learn various methods and strategies that help students build their reading and

language skills. Students at the University of Washington, the University of Florida, and Drexel

University take a course on the "Instructional Role of the Information Specialist", in which they

learn how to design, develop, and evaluate information. The skills students receive in this course

include the ability to create technology related programs for students to learn more about the computer, the ability to network with teachers in order to create collaborations, and an understanding of learning theories.

The skills and content knowledge students learn from their coursework in school library media will be useful for students and teachers. The school media specialists' background in research and the evaluation of information will be useful when students need to learn how to conduct scholarly research for their projects. School media specialists can show students where to find information from sources other than books and the Internet. They can also show students how to analyze information, teaching them critical thinking skills. When students are able to read critically, not only can they develop ideas on their own, but they can formulate arguments based on what they know about the subject. Students will also become informed citizens as well, giving students an opportunity to make good decisions based on logic and rational reasoning.

School media specialists will be able to develop a library collection with technological resources that will support student and teacher learning. When school media specialists have control over their library budget, they can purchase books and resources educators need to support their lesson plans. School media specialist and teachers can work together to plan ideas for online resources and open opportunities for collaboration. For example, if a teacher is doing a lesson on plants, the school media specialist can provide books and online resources that can help students learn in multiple ways.

School librarians can teach courses in literacy, computers, and research to students. Students who are far behind in their classes in reading and writing a work with the school media specialist to build up their skills in literacy and prepare them for ELA test. In providing instructional training, the school librarian can show students how to use different computer

programs like Microsoft Word and Excel or the Internet. School media specialist can help students excel at their own pace, ensuring their success in learning how to conduct good research and critical thinking skills, a goal of the CCSS.

**V. School Media Specialists and Teacher Collaboration**

If students are expected to learn the skills outlined in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), teachers and school media specialists should work together to educate their students. Because the CCSS are geared towards college and career readiness through the development of skills and content knowledge, school media specialists should be sought out for their skills in curriculum development, research, and teaching. School media specialists can be especially useful because of their background in finding resources, conducting research, and using technology, which makes them innovators of teaching and information gathering. Teachers may lack certain skills in using online databases or classroom technology. School media specialists can bridge that gap by educating teachers and students how to utilize these resources.

Collaborative teaching as defined by Robinson and Schaible (1995) is "any academic experiences in which two teachers work together in designing and teaching a course that itself uses group learning techniques". Robinson and Schaible (1995) are right that collaboration occurs when we work together on fulfilling the goal of teaching students effectively, but the subjects in their definition are too narrow. Collaborations can occur among people who have the ability to educate students. The relationship does not necessarily have to be between two teachers but can be between other professionals such as the guidance counselor, a school nurse, and the school media specialists. Since each of these educators bring with them unique experiences and different perspectives, they too can collaborate with teachers to develop curricula and classroom lessons.

In addition to Robinson and Schaible's (1995) definition of collaboration, other scholars have shown that educators should work continuously throughout the school year if students are to reap the full benefits of their learning experience. According to Kennedy and Monty (2011), the collaboration between faculty and school librarians must exist over an extended period of time if students are to acquire post-secondary skills, including information literacy, writing, research, and time management skills. Kennedy and Monty (2011) developed Dynamic Purposeful Learning (DPL), a three-stage pedagogical technique, to enhance student learning through the collaborative efforts of teachers and school librarians. At the first stage, the faculty member and the school librarian meet to discuss course assignments that would best teach the post-secondary skills. After planning the coursework, the educators attend an information literacy session with students to discuss their roles in developing and implementing the course assignment. The implementation of the assignment and research process are the last two stages of the DPL. Students develop a literature review with the help of the librarian on a topic of their interest. The school librarian shows students appropriate online databases, magazines, and books that can aid their research. When students complete their literature review and introduction for their project, they hand it to the faculty member for grading, corrections, and approval. When students complete the first stage of their assignment, they move on to the participant observation stage. Students observe what they see in their natural environment and record their findings. During this stage, the faculty member and school librarian provide guidance to students on how to organize and compose their findings. At the end of the semester, students hand in their introductions, literature reviews, and observations to the faculty member for final grading, corrections, and feedback with comments. As a result of using DPL, students were not only able

to enhance their learning experience through learning different skills at each stage but was also able to recognize the role each educator played in their research project.

The use of Dynamic Purposeful Learning in a collaborative way could be implemented in all schools teaching under the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Student independence, critical thinking, and research skills emphasized in the CCSS can be achieved when teachers and school media specialists work together throughout the school year. Teachers and school media specialists can discuss the curriculum, lesson plans and assignments that would best teach the CCSS, and the resources they can use to enhance student learning experience, such as YouTube clips, multimedia DVDs and Videos, PowerPoint presentations, or class demonstrations. Projects developed layered in stages such as the one use by Kennedy and Monty (2011), can also give students the opportunity to understand each of the educators' roles in the research process so that they know who can help with which part of the project. Students exposed to collaborative teaching not only enhance their learning because they are able to work with two different educators with unique skill sets but also understand the importance of successful teamwork.

The collaboration between teachers and school media specialists over a long period of time can benefit students in a number of ways. One major benefit is the increase of student achievement levels on standardized tests (Robinson & Schaible, 2005; Milbury, 2005; McClure, 2008). According to Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell (2000) in their study of school media programs in Colorado, the researchers found that students reading test scores on the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) increased when there were changes in library media program development, information technology, teacher/school media specialist collaboration, and student visits to the library. Smith (2001) also found improvements on student test scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) exam. The Texas School Libraries study (2001) showed

that over 10 percent more students in schools with librarians did better on the TAAS than schools without librarians. Teachers collaborating with school media specialist provide opportunities to students to learn information literacy skills. Students' development of information literacy improves ability to conduct scholarly research and to take tests, evidenced by improved test scores. When students are taught how to read critically, they can elaborate on their thoughts and answer the questions well.

 Co-teaching between teachers and school media specialists benefit students with a variety of learning styles. Whereas some students are better visual learners and work best with images and written information, others students are auditory learners, preferring class discussions and lectures. Some students are tactile learners and prefer a hands-on approach.  To address this problem, teachers and school media specialists could create lesson plans with three sections: lecture, images, and activities. For example, a teacher doing a lesson plan could create a three part curriculum. During the first part of the class, the teacher talks about the planets and the stars in our solar system, while writing on the chalkboard for students to copy notes. After the lecture, the school media specialist could set up the projector and laptop to stream images and videos of the solar system while the teacher explains each slide to students. Finally, the teacher and school media specialists could work with students on an activity about the solar system such as drawing the solar system or making model planets out of paper. The importance of addressing various learning styles is important for students to understand course material.

Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, & Fisher (2012) suggest that collaboration and co-teaching between special education teachers and content specialists can benefit students with learning disabilities. In the United States, about 80 percent of students with a learning disability read at an average of 3 to 5 years behind grade level (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Marder,

2003). Students with learning disabilities will have a difficult time comprehending complex texts, leaving them far behind from their peers in the general education classroom (Fenty, McDuffie-Landrum, & Fisher, 2012). School media specialists could help students with learning disabilities gain literacy skills both through workshops and one-on-one tutorials. School media specialists can gather books and materials such as flashcards and letter cards to help the student pronounce words and read. The school librarian can also provide online games and websites that will teach students about grammar, sentence structure, and other topics involved with literacy. The collaboration between the two educators will help students with learning disabilities immensely, with their overall skills, while putting them in a position to learn the standards of the Common Core.

Collaborative teaching between teachers and school media specialists benefits the instructors also (Robinson & Schaible, 1995; Milbury, 2005). Teachers and school media specialists can rely on one another to give each other advice about their teaching styles (Milbury, 2005). Like a friend we rely on for help or advice, teachers can talk to school media specialists about how they taught a lesson in class. Teachers and school media specialists can grow as educators by giving valuable advice and feedback about their teaching techniques (Milbury, 2005).

**VI. The Reformers Getting It Wrong Again: Forgetting About Social Context and Socioeconomic Status in the Development of Common Core State Standards**

Michelle Rhee, the former Education chancellor of the Washington D.C school system and the authors of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have one thing in common: a belief that all students can achieve academically regardless of where they live and their socioeconomic background. Prior to becoming Education Chancellor, Rhee was a Teach for America corps member at Harlem Park elementary school in Baltimore, Maryland, one of the

lowest performing schools in the state (Ripley, 2008). Rhee, a novice at teaching, recalled her first year to be "the worst and in many ways definitely the toughest year of my entire life" (Turque, 2010). Assigned to teach a second grade class, Rhee had a difficult time controlling her classroom. Students would constantly disrupt her as she taught, speaking to one another despite the teacher's command to stop. Frustrated, Rhee resorted to using abusive tactics to silence her students. She "took little pieces of masking tape and put them on her student's lips" (Zucker, 2010). As a result, "their [the students] skin is coming off and that they are bleeding" (Zucker, 2010). Spending the majority of the school year trying to control her students rather than teach them, the school saw a significant drop in second grade test scores. At the end of Rhee's first year, the average math and reading percentiles from the Certified Test for Basic Skills (CTBS) for second graders dropped from 64% to 17% proficiency in mathematics and 37% to 21% proficiency in reading (Brandenburg, 2011). Refusing to give up, Rhee took teaching and education courses over the summer and received her teaching certificate. In September, she returned to Harlem Park elementary school, where she allegedly increased student achievement to its highest levels in years.

During Rhee's second year of teaching at Harlem Park, she claimed that she had raised second grade reading scores from 13 percent to 90 percent (Ravitch, 2010). Though there are no records indicating that she accomplished such a goal, Rhee was nonetheless considered a highly effective educator by former New York City Chancellor Joel Klein and former Washington D.C. mayor Adrian Fenty. A few years after she left Harlem Park elementary school and became Education Chancellor, she concluded that effective teachers could overcome poverty and other disadvantages (Ravitch, 2010). During an interview with Newsweek magazine, Rhee said, "Those kids, where they lived didn't change. The violence in the parents didn't change. Their

diets didn't change. The violence in the community didn't change. The only thing that changed

for those 70 kids was the adults who were in front of them every single day teaching them"

(Ravitch, 2010). Placing more emphasis and responsibility on the teacher as the main educator of

students, Rhee's lack of understanding and total disregard for external factors outside of the

school shows that she is oblivious of the inner city experience.

The National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers also

failed to acknowledge the impact of social environment on student achievement. In the

frequently asked questions section of the CCSS website, they answer the question "Why do we

need education standards?" with "We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where

they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce" (National

Governor's Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The answer they

provided was simply a politically motivated promise towards giving all students an equal

education because of their disregard for external factors such as social context and

socioeconomic status. The following sections address the relationship between social context and

socioeconomic status for academic achievement. I also address how the school media specialist

can make a difference in inner city schools by teaching students the practical skills they need in

college and the workforce.

**Where You Live Makes a Difference: Social Context and Academic Achievement**

There is a relationship between residential location and educational attainment (Sander,

2006). Wooley et al. (2008) found that school achievement was linked to higher levels of

bonding social capital and low poor neighborhood physical conditions. Wooley et al. (2008)

define bonding social capital as the social interactions between neighbors, parents, and children.

In building bonding social capital, members within the community work together to produce

positive outcomes within their neighborhood such as hosting bake sales, and annual holiday parties. When members of the community can maintain their resources and physical infrastructures within the community, they promote a sense of belonging and trust among children who know they can call on their neighbors for help if needed.

Several ethnographies have been published highlighting the differences between suburban and inner city neighborhoods. Elijah Anderson's *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (1999) describes about this phenomenon. Anderson (1999) sets his ethnography on Germantown Avenue, a major street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He starts off at Chestnut Hill, an ethnically diverse neighborhood where the houses are large and the lawns are green. Also known as the "suburb of the city", there are several small elegant boutique shops along Germantown Avenue. Some of these shops are jewelry stores, gourmet food shops, camera shops, and clothing stores. There is also a library in the area, as well as a regional rail station. Most of the residents who live here are middle to upper class families who for the most part get along with one another without a problem. They are, in other words, living in harmony amongst one another. As in any neighborhood, there is a beginning and there is an end. As he continues down Germantown Avenue, the transition from upper-middle class diversity begins to change not for the better, but for the worse.

Anderson (1999) discusses the neighborhood changes he observed down Germantown Avenue. He observed the transition between racial, socioeconomic and class lines as he crossed Broad Street into Philadelphia's north-south artery. Anderson (1999) notes the change of scenery compared to the more diverse and "cleaner" Chestnut Hill area. The neighborhood is characterized as "concentrated ghetto poverty", an area of the city that is "still shadowed by the legacy of slavery and second class citizenship" (Anderson, 2008). The majority of residents who

live there are African Americans. Stores along the street sell clothing, sneakers, furniture, and electronics. Pawnshops and check-cashing places are prevalent in the neighborhood, allowing residents to cash in checks for money and pay bills. The streets are loud and noisy with music blasting from cars and in front of homes. Anderson (1999) notices open-air drug deals, prostitutes standing on the corner, boys shooting craps, and young children playing in trash filled abandoned lots. People are able to walk with little trouble during the day. At night however, residents feel they cannot walk outside of their homes without facing possible danger. Living in a so-called "hyperghetto", these residents are socially isolated from mainstream America (Anderson, 1999). Anderson's description of life along Germantown Avenue can be used to understand the differences between two Brooklyn neighborhoods: East New York and Carroll Gardens. To demonstrate how social context influences student achievement, I will compare two neighborhoods in order to highlight the differences supported by scholarly research.

**East New York and Carroll Gardens: Two Brooklyn Neighborhoods, Two Very Different Worlds**

As an employee of the Brooklyn Public Library, I have worked in different branches across the borough. I have worked at the Jamaica Bay branch in Canarsie, the Central library at Grand Army Plaza, the Ulmer Park branch in Bensonhurst, the Arlington branch in East New York, the Clinton Hill branch, and the Carroll Gardens branch. In each of these neighborhoods, there were clear and distinct differences. There were differences in racial makeup, physical infrastructure (houses, buildings) and available resources such as markets, medical offices, and children's playgrounds. In comparing two of these neighborhoods, East New York and Carroll Gardens, I will demonstrate how they differ from each other and also show how the social context influences student achievement.

*East New York*

      East New York was not always an impoverished neighborhood occupied by an African Americans and Latinos. According to Walter Thabit in his 2004 book *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, the first people to occupy the area were of Dutch descent in 1690. Originally called the New Lotts of Flatbush, Colonel John R. Pitkin came to build a community with businesses, factories, shops, homes, and schools in 1835. Though his plans did not succeed due to the financial panic of 1837, his dream and vision did not go to waste, as a major street formerly known as Broadway was named after Pitkin (modern day Pitkin Avenue). During the last few years of the nineteenth century, German immigrants occupied East New York and helped develop the settlement through their talents as brush makers, goldbeaters, and tailors. With the development of the subway system, the opening of the Williamsburg Bridge, and the building of tenements in the area, Jews, Russians, Poles, and Italians began to occupy East New York. A majority of these groups remained in the area until the mid-1960s before they fled for better neighborhoods, moving away from the minority groups coming to East New York.

      East New York went through a social transformation in the 1960s as a result of white flight, a phenomenon describing the migration of whites from urban cities to rural areas or suburbs (Kantor & Brenzel, 1993). According to the 1960 County map provided by the Social Explorer database, a substantial number of whites, specifically Italians and Jews, continued to reside in East New York. However, in the 1970 Census Tract, there was clearly a change in the percentage of Whites residing in the neighborhood. According to Thabit (2004), by the end of 1966, the population of Blacks and Puerto Ricans residing in East New York was at 80%. The shift in demographics was in large part due to the growing influx of minorities moving in from the south (Kantor & Brenzel, 1993) and Puerto Rico in hopes of finding employment and

opportunities. The migration of African Americans and Hispanics brought fear to White residents as crime such as robberies, shootings, knifings, and gang terror began to increase (Thabit, 2004). White residents, feeling threatened and unsafe, left their businesses and synagogues, and fled south of Linden Boulevard or to the suburbs to move away from incoming African American and Puerto Rican families (Thabit, 2004). With a depleting tax base to maintain city services and programs in the neighborhood, East New York soon went into urban decay, a process where a city or neighborhood falls into disrepair. The resulting impact of urban decay left many residents in East New York unemployed and helpless, living with no essential services such as law enforcement or trash pickup to maintain the neighborhood.

Racist government housing policies prevented African American and Puerto Rican families from moving out of East New York (Thabit, 2004). Prior to the passing of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, or the Fair Housing Act which prohibited discrimination in the sale or rental of property based on race, sex, religion, color, or national origin (U.S. department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007), it was difficult for Blacks and Puerto Ricans to obtain a loan from the bank to move into more affluent neighborhoods such as Canarsie and Flatbush. Though the Civil Rights Act of 1866 prohibited discrimination against Blacks in housing and employment, the government did not heavily enforce the law (The Leadership Conference, 2013). When Blacks and Puerto Ricans first migrated to New York, they first found a cheap area to live, usually a ghetto, until they were able to settle elsewhere (Thabit, 2004). Redlining, a racially motivated practice used to prevent Blacks and Latinos from obtaining a better standard of living, forced residents to remain in the "ghetto", unable to leave their deplorable conditions (Thabit, 2004). With the government, real estate, and banking industries unwilling to help the residents of East New York, the neighborhood began to deteriorate, with a heavy concentration

of families in poverty and welfare (Thabit, 2004). Remnants of the ghetto continue to be seen today in modern day East New York.

The neighborhood of East New York continues to be a highly residential area with few businesses operating on the main streets of Pennsylvania, Pitkin, and New Lots Avenues. The residents living in the area remain predominantly African American (50%) and Latino (39%), as depicted in the 2000 census tract of Social Explorer. According to the New York City Department of Health and Hygiene 2006 report on East New York and New Lots (including Cypress Hills), as of 2000, there are 173,700 residents living in the neighborhood. Thirty-four percent of those residents live in poverty. Most of the homes off the Shepard, Van Siclen, and Euclid Avenue stops on the A and C subway lines are either newly built or dilapidated. There are remnants of old Chinese food, litter, and bottles along the sidewalks and the street.

### *Carroll Gardens*

According to the Brooklyn Collection at the Brooklyn Public Library (2005), Native Americans once inhabited what is now Carroll Gardens before they sold the land to Dutch farmers Adrianse Bennet and Jacques Bentyn in 1636. Named after Charles Carroll, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, the neighborhood was once part of South Brooklyn until the 1960s when it became a part of North Brooklyn. The development of warehouses and docks in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn allowed construction workers to dredge the Gowanus Creek and swamps nearby to form an inland waterway. It also allowed for the creation of a ferry service between Manhattan and Greenwood cemetery in 1846. In the 1840s, Carroll Park, the once private garden for residents to grow crops, became a public park in the 1850s.William Bedell and John Layton constructed brownstone in the Carroll Gardens neighborhood in the 1870s and 1880s.

In the early 19$^{th}$ century, Irish Americans began residing in Carroll Gardens. By the turn of 20$^{th}$ century, Italian immigrants moved into the neighborhood. Italian businesses began to flourish across Court Street, opening restaurants and bakeries selling classic Italian dishes and breads. There were also several churches that were built in the area to provide religious service for residents. Some of the churches include St. Paul's Episcopal Church, St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church, and South Congregational Church.

Today, Carroll Gardens continues to be a predominant Italian neighborhood. According to the American Community Survey 2006-2010, the neighborhood is predominantly White (80% of residents) and less than 10% of residents are African American. According to City-Data (2013), the median household income in 2011 was $89,870. The unemployment levels are very low for this area, with less than 4% out of work or working for cash without paying taxes. Rent to live in the area is expensive and averages out around $1,882 or more per month. Most of the shopping areas with brand name stores such as Starbucks, Rite-Aid, and Nutbox are located on Court and Smith Streets.

**East New York and Carroll Gardens: Implications for Schools**

In conducting an analysis of two schools: Public School 345 in East New York and Public School 58 in Carroll Gardens, I found that there were substantial differences between the two schools in terms of racial makeup, academic achievement and resources. According to the NYC Department of Education Progress Report 2012-2013, 92.4% of the student body was African American or Hispanic. At P.S. 58, only 21% of students were African American or Hispanic. This would make sense given that the racial makeup of each school reflects the community in which students live. Latino and African American students attending P.S. 58 may

also come from the Red Hook section, west of Carroll Gardens. More than half of the residents that live in Red Hook are Hispanic or African American (City-Data, 2013).

Academic achievement levels differed immensely in both reading and math test scores at both schools. At P.S. 345, only 15.0% of students on the state English test and 15.2% of students on the state Math exam received a reached or exceeded proficiency of level 3 or 4 (New York City Department of Education, 2013). At P.S. 58 however, 65.3% of students on the state English test and 64.5% on the state math test reached or exceeded proficiency at levels 3 or 4 (New York City Department of Education, 2013) These statistics are significant to our discussion on social context because it demonstrates how the neighborhood impacts academic achievement. If children are vulnerable to violence and crime within their neighborhoods, this adds more obstacles in addition to poverty and simple survival. Living in impoverished neighborhoods with little to no support from the community and lawmakers, families cannot find assistance to maintain a healthy lifestyle for their children and themselves.

The available resources at both schools vary as well. During the 2012-2013 school years, P.S. 345 operated with a budget of $5,740,155 while P.S. 58 operated with a budget of $6,546,203; a difference of more than $800,000 (New York City Department of Education, 2013). The yearly school budget pays for teacher and staff salaries, after school programs, school supplies, and textbooks. P.S. 345 have fewer teachers compared to P.S. 58 (33 classroom teachers at P.S. 345 compared to 45 classroom teachers at P.S. 58) (New York City Department of Education, 2013) In addition, there are more ICT (Integrated Co-Teaching) classrooms for Kindergarten to grade 5 students at P.S. 58 than P.S. 345, in which two educators, a general education teacher and a special education teacher, work together to ensure that students with disabilities are educated alongside their peers in the general education classroom (New York

Department of Education, 2013). The integration of ICT classrooms in schools reduces the

student to teacher ratio and allows for more one-on-one interactions with teachers. There are 93

staff members including administrators, teachers, and support staff at P.S. 58, whereas at P.S.

345, there are only 62 staff members.

P.S. 58 also offer a larger variety of classes and services for their students. In addition to

physical education, science, and art classes, students at P.S. 58 can take classes in drama/theater

and music. Students can also join the school chorus and take classes on music vocals. P.S. 345

do not offer those classes. Students at P.S. 345 are only offered classes in English as a Second

Language (ESL), math, physical education, and general science. Students at P.S. 58 have access

to a number of services and programs such as before and after school, school social workers, a

full time school psychologist, and the library. Students at P.S. 345 do not offer as many programs

as P.S. 58, offering only before and after school programs and a part-time school psychologist.

The school library at P.S. 321 was only opened during class visits and was closed off to students

throughout the day.

I observed the lack of school resources at P.S. 321 during a graduate research project in

2012. The library did not have a school media specialist or any full time staff member. When I

glanced at the shelves, the books were out of place from their Dewey Decimal classification, an

organization system commonly used to shelve books by subject area. I found a number of books

that were outdated as well (books on Pluto as a planet was still on the shelf). Aside from the

books, there was also limited seating space for students. There were only 4 long tables available

with 6 chairs at each table. A separate reading section was unavailable because of the limited

space in the library. Though there were computers available for student use, the dust on the

screens and keyboard showed that they haven't been used in a long time. Though students were

excited to go to the library whenever their teacher made a class visit, it was unfortunate that students did not have access to their school library during the school day.

The differences in resources can explain why students at P.S 58 are excelling academically on standardized test compared to students at P.S. 345. In studies conducted by Jimenez-Castellano (2010) and Du & Hu (2008), the researchers found that student academic performance was positively correlated to school resources. School resources include personnel (teachers and administrators), fiscal resources, and facility resources (Jimenez-Castellano, 2010). Students attending schools with effective leadership from principals, well qualified teachers, larger school budgets, and a well maintained classroom, were more likely to excel academically than students that don't (Jimenez-Castellano, 2010). In addition, parent involvement at their child's school is positively correlated to student achievement (Du & Hu, 2008). Parents at P.S 58 are more involved at their child's school. According to the Learning Environment Survey 2012-2013, an online survey given to teachers and parents yearly to provide feedback about their school, 67% of parents and 100% of teachers responded. Parents also attend PTA meetings and join the school leadership team, where they can discuss the needs of the school and how best to meet them (Bredthauer, 2013). Parents at P.S. 345, however, are less engaged in their child's school as demonstrated by the low percentage (2%) of respondents who answered the Learning Environment Survey (2013).

### *Social Class Differences in relation to Student Achievement*

Richard Rothstein (2004) addresses the issue of social class and its impact on student achievement in regard to the Black-White achievement gap. He found differences in health, child rearing, and housing between Blacks and Whites from different social classes. In child rearing, middle classes parents were more likely to be involved in reading to their children, having

discussions and asking questions, and were unlikely to discipline their child with physical force. Lower-class parents, however, did not read to their children, were more demanding, and were more likely to use physical force. Lower-class children also face disadvantages with regard to health (Rothstein, 2004, Buckingham et al., 2013, Fiscella & Kitzman, 2009). Lower class children were more likely to have bad vision, hearing and oral health. Compared to middle-class children, lower-class children are more likely to have lead poising, asthma, low birth weight, inadequate nutrition, and lack of medical care. In terms of housing, whereas middle class families are more likely to stay in one place, lower class families are more likely to move from place to place.

Upper and middle-class children have more opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge than lower class children. Lareau (2011), in discussing the various childrearing differences among the three classes, was able to vividly show why upper and middle class children do much better in school compared to lower class children. Whereas upper and middle-class parents engage their children in *concerted cultivation*, which is the fostering of a child's talents and skills, lower class children engage in what Lareau (2011) calls *accomplished natural growth*, where children develop their skills naturally through independent play and parental directives. Because parents from the upper and middle-classes have the finances to fund their children to go to recreational programs such as piano lessons or soccer practice, they are able to expose their children to a number of new experiences that will allow them to socialize with others and gain new skills. Children also gain a sense of entitlement from these experiences and believe that they can get what they want if desired (Lareau, 2011). Unlike upper and middle-class families, lower class families may not have the finances to pay for recreational programs and are unable to give their children anything they may need or want. There are exceptions

where parents and children persevere to make it out of the lower class but this success is fragile. Families can continue to face many obstacles.

**VII. The School Media Specialist Role in Inner City Schools**

   If school libraries, occupied by a librarian, were opened every day for students to use, it could make a difference in the lives of students living in the inner city. Students would have easier access to books and technology at their library, resources that may not be easily available in their neighborhood. Students would also have a place to study outside of their homes, especially if they aren't able to concentrate and get their schoolwork done. Most importantly, the school library acts as a safe haven for children. Working in a public library, I usually see students come after school and stay until a parent picks them up from work or until the library closes. Since the library is free and safe, it is an alternative to roaming the unsafe city streets. Keeping school libraries open opened after school would be ideal. Students would be able to get help and develop new skills in literacy, writing, and research. This is where the urban school librarian comes in.

   School media specialists can provide one-on-one assistance to inner city students and help them gain research, literacy, and writing skills emphasized by the CCSS. These professionals can sit down with students and show them the research process from beginning to end. They know tips and tricks for finding the information they need. As a library professional, I have sat down with students and showed them the research process step-by-step from key term search to Internet and library databases to evaluating sources. With this hands-on instruction, you can not only test the student on the research process by asking them to demonstrate a task, but also have the pleasure of knowing he/she understand a research method that will be useful into the future.

The school media specialist can also help inner city students gain literacy skills. According to a study on culturally relevant books and closing the literacy gap, Hughes-Hassell & Rawson (2011) found that African American males who read texts relevant to their experiences were more likely be interested in leisure reading than those who do not. Because school media specialists have the ability to purchase culturally relevant materials and develop programs that encourage reading, they can attract groups of students usually uninterested in reading and, in addition, engage them in a meaningful conversation in which they can speak about their own experiences in relation to the characters. When there is someone to engage and listen to students, it makes all the difference both in and out of school. The school media specialist could perhaps develop plans for advocacy in the community. Not only can school media specialists encourage students to read self-selected materials, as opposed to what teachers require, they can also provide students with a platform for voicing their concerns, so that they can work together to foster change within their communities.

Students who need help with writing can ask the school media specialist for assistance. Just as in the case of conducting research, school media specialists can work one-on-one with students and help them understand the writing process. These professionals can provide students with books, online resources, and pointers on how to write an effective paper. They can also find relevant sources for students to read, and show they are relevant.

School media specialists are such an asset to teachers and students that they should not be ignored. I believe that these professionals can be the difference maker in inner city schools because they can provide the needed assistance for students who are having difficulties in the classroom. School media specialists can work with students one-on-one or in small groups. Students will also have opportunities to learn from educators with different teaching approaches.

In working with teachers and providing the proper guidance in implementing the standards in English Language Arts, school media specialists can work collaboratively to help students succeed in the CCSS curriculum.

**VIII. MyLibraryNYC: A Model for Public and School Library Collaboration**

Implementing a public/school library collaborative model like MyLibraryNYC across the country will remove barriers for students and teachers who may have difficulty obtaining information and resources from outside the classroom. MyLibraryNYC is a collaborative effort between three New York library systems: Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Public Library, and New York Public Library and the New York City Department of Education. The goal of the program is to provide students and teachers access to public library materials and online resources from their websites. The MyLibraryNYC collaborative first began in 2011 with about 50 schools across the 5 boroughs. To date, more than 100 schools are participating in the program.

The MyLibraryNYC model allows for students and teachers to obtain information immediately through the library website. While educators are waiting for their books to come through their delivery system, they can utilize online databases like Ebscohost and Student Learning Center to gather information to teach their lesson plans. Students can also use the online databases to conduct their research and find information about careers and college entrance exams. This will allow for students to complete their assignments on time without running into any issues regarding access to information.

The MyLibraryNYC collaborative benefits both students and educators. Students attending a participating school receive a special library card with unique features. Some of the features include fine free borrowing, access to their school/public library union catalog, and

more borrowing privileges. Students can borrow up to 50 items at a time. The items can range from books to multimedia such as DVDs and videocassettes. Students can also place 15 holds on their library card, 5 more than the regular cardholder. Holds are fulfilled by branch library staff through a generated title page and trapped once the item is found on the shelves. Holds that are fulfilled are delivered through BookOps, a delivery system servicing the three library systems and schools. Students can return and obtain books through BookOps when teachers place holds for them on the school/public library union catalog. Students can renew their materials online, by phone or in person a maximum of ten times.

Educators have the same privileges like students except for two things. Educators can borrow teacher book sets from their local library to support the NYC curriculum in all grades and subjects (MyLibraryNYC, 2013). Examples of teacher book sets include titles such as Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Ken Kesey's *One Who Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest.* Teachers can reserve these and other titles through the union catalog and have them delivered through BookOps. Teachers can also borrow up to 100 items on their library cards. In addition, teachers can place up to 50 holds and can renew their materials only twice before they must be returned to the library.

In order for schools to take part of the MyLibraryNYC collaborative, there must be a school media specialist or a full time school library employee present at all times. This is important to note because without the school media specialist, the program could not exist. School media specialists are needed to provide MyLibraryNYC coordinators with information pertaining to their school library and how the program will benefit them. School media specialists are also needed to communicate updates from MyLibraryNYC coordinators to other educators regarding any changes to the program. By working in conjunction with the

coordinators, they can discuss the effectiveness or ineffectiveness and provide feedback on how to make the program better for the following year.

**XI. Conclusion**

Students and teachers are in dire need of help. Teachers cannot do it alone in educating their students and helping them learn the skills listed in the Common Core State Standards. Teachers already have a workload on their agenda. Classroom teachers have to teach students daily for several hours a day with occasional breaks in between. Teachers also have to grade assignments, prepare lesson plans, make photocopies of worksheets, and set up their classroom. Teachers also work individually with students after school or during lunch. Teachers are also mediators in the classroom, handling all problems that may arise between students and disrupt the learning environment. Teachers cannot do it alone. They need help from other educators to not only teach students but to also make the CCSS work. This is where the school media specialist can come in.

School media specialists can be the difference maker in effectively teaching students the skills listed in the CCSS. The skills and knowledge they bring with them from library school can help students develop useful skills such as research and critical thinking skills. School media specialists work with students in becoming independent thinkers, giving them the ability to make their own decisions. They also give teachers the resources they need to help students succeed, to meet their teaching goals. School media specialists are not just avid book readers or professionals knowledgeable about searching for sources. They are also educators who can make a difference in the classroom and at their schools, especially in the inner city.

School media specialists are needed more than ever in inner city schools. They can help raise student achievement among African American and Hispanic students and possibly help

close the Black White achievement gap. This is not to say that school librarians can make a drastic difference like saving troubled schools or boosting test scores by more than 50% within a year. However, they can provide students of color with an opportunity to succeed through gaining literacy, research, and writing skills. School media specialist in inner city schools can also collaborate with public libraries to bring more resources such as books and online databases. Without school media specialists, such collaborative efforts like MyLibraryNYC would not exist and would not be as successful as it is today without them.

School media specialists are not just information specialist, but they are teachers, technology instructors, and mentors. School media specialists can teach students the skills teachers may not have much experience in such as research and information literacy. They can work with teachers to implement technology in the classroom to create a vibrant learning environment for all students. School media specialists are also available to work individually with students on a variety of projects or to provide them with understanding about what they had learned in class. The inclusion of the school media specialists in the curriculum and instructional development in schools is vital for the success of the CCSS and students entering college and the workforce.

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