

## **Book Review**

**Donham, J. & Sims, C. (2020). *Enhancing teaching and learning: A leadership guide for school librarians, Fourth Edition*. Chicago, IL: ALA Neal-Schuman. ISBN 978-0-8389-4717-3 (Paper)**

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Written before the pandemic, the release of this thoughtful book of how librarians become leaders in their schools (and inform leaders about the work of libraries) could not be timelier. For this fourth edition, Dr. Jean Donham, a retired professor at the University of Northern Iowa School of Library Studies, is joined by junior high school librarian Chelsea Sims. Together they craft a masterful work in support of evidence-based approaches to inquiry-based learning, reading, intellectual freedom, and equity of access. Readers who follow their practical advice will undoubtedly become true leaders in their schools and communities.

This “leadership guide” proffers a pragmatic approach to assuring student success through partnership and strategic collaboration... with school administrators, classroom teachers, and the greater community. Every chapter of this sensibly designed text begins with the identification of 3-8 themes. Replete with real-world examples that reinforce the theory and recommendations, each chapter concludes with a set of leadership strategies specific to the roles of teacher, information specialist, and program administrator; scenarios for discussion; and an extensive list of references for those wishing to read further. The figures that populate each chapter illustrate the type of data to be collected, compiled into worksheets and sample reports designed to persuade others to support library proposals.

Part I, *The Context*, consists of five chapters that illustrate how librarians can lead school efforts to improve student equity of opportunity. Authors Donham and Sims identify leadership strategies for working with students in Chapter 1. “Students” addresses the role that school library programs play in improving equity of opportunity.

Chapter 2 uses tactics employed by school librarians to help students become effective users of information within the context of a curriculum that librarians did not develop. “Curriculum” explains the important assets school librarians bring to the table that enhance curricula, such as inquiry-based learning skills. In the authors’ estimation, the school librarian works from a unique perspective, aware of the curriculum content across grade levels and disciplines. This knowledge could be put to great use for instructional coaching, e.g., working with teachers to improve students’ ability to extract information from articles.

In Chapter 3, Donham and Sims declare that “the principal can be a key advocate for the school library program,” but most have “little understanding of the school library program” (p. 33). The authors suggest aligning the AASL National School Library Standards to the professional standards that govern education leaders. Examples of data that should be collected, compiled, and summarized are clarified in worksheets and sample reports.

“The School District” (Chapter 4) examines the specific contributions that a librarian can make to district planning and policy. The authors proffer winning approaches for tackling the library budget proposal process, including a sample elementary school media center budget document that is easy to compile and understand.

Chapter 5 demonstrates how school librarians work to cultivate “The Community” through cooperative activities. In the authors’ estimation, community outreach includes communication vehicles, such as presentations and newsletters aimed at families, and recruitment for advisory committees; activities targeted to public libraries, such as summer reading, homework help, shared resources; and partnerships with local businesses and community volunteers. The authors recognize that effective alliances take time to develop and recommend nurturing those relationships through regular contact, reporting on the progress made, the impact on students, and “publicly acknowledging the business so that the community is aware of its contribution” (p. 67).

Part II looks at *The School Library Program* through ten lenses, beginning with “Collaboration” (Chapter 6) where the authors offer models for school librarian collaborations, including a planning guide for teacher-librarian collaboration. Efforts to maximize access to information is the subject of Chapter 7, “Access for Learning and Teaching.” Donham and Sims describe ways in which the school librarian can assure accessibility through flexible scheduling of instruction and circulation policies. “The Collection” (Chapter 8) considers selection policies and how to deal with requests for reconsideration.

The chapter on “Literacy” explores the importance of access to books and how the responsibility of nurturing readers is shared by teachers, parents, children/youth, and librarians. It highlights several approaches to social reading through community events, literature circles, book discussion groups, and reading incentive programs.

Chapter 10 concerns the virtual reach of the library via its website (content and design) and social media. “Technology Leadership” (Chapter 11) begins with a results-driven technology plan that includes staff development. Authors Donham and Sims discuss the various roles that a school librarian plays when it comes to technology leadership, including advocating for technology in support of teaching and learning; coordinating technology in terms of the instructional context; implementing systems for scheduling and sharing facilities or resources, inventorying equipment, and assessment; as well as formal teaching and informal coaching of teachers and students on how to use technology in an ethical manner.

In “Inquiry-Based Learning” (Chapter 12), Donham and Sims present various frameworks used to discern what a student knows, wants to know, and what he/she has learned in the process. A range of models are discussed, including curiosity and wonder in inquiry, concept-based inquiry, deep learning, and the ACRL Framework (information and media literacy).

Chapter 13 defines assessment and why it is needed by students and teachers, describes the two types of approaches to assessment, formative and summative assessment; illustrates the benefits of self-assessment; and presents various assessment tools, e.g., rubrics. While “Assessment of Student Learning” is important, “Library Program Evaluation” is also necessary. Chapter 14 stresses the importance of continuous improvement that begins with data collection, creating a baseline for measuring a program’s current status in nine categories: literacy; curriculum, instruction, and

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assessment; professional learning; robust infrastructure; budget and resources; community partnerships; data and privacy; collaborative leadership; and use of space/time.

The final chapter (15), “Leadership,” describes the attributes of leaders and how school librarians can influence or “lead from the middle.” This book is a “must-read” for all school librarians who aspire to contribute as much as they can to students’ success. Moreover, buy a second copy to give to your principal.