

Interparents' report - Stage de Biblioteque - 24th - 25th March 2011

Librarians from all the European schools attended the Stage along with the Library Working group. The session started on day 1 with group and open discussions on the current situation, where everyone was encouraged to identify problems and challenges. On day 2, groups were asked to take one of the problems identified and to suggest strategies for overcoming the challenge. All the librarians agreed that libraries were there to promote knowledge and a love/respect of knowledge but at the same time always questioning. However the majority of librarians feel de-moralised and regret the fact that management do not take full advantage of their skills and teachers do not always respect their position in the School. The Library should be the "heart" of the school and the natural link between subject, cultures, pupils, teachers and parents. It was pointed out that in the current climate of restricted budgets, libraries are an invaluable resource which is currently being underused. Any new recommendation will have to include a "do-it-yourself" policy and Librarians will need to have a creative approach to change the identity of libraries in schools.

The following points were identified and discussed offering final recommendations.

Current situation:

- Internet has a huge influence and demand on time
- students are often asking for DVDs etc., not books.
- physical space is often an issue and or is not ideal - space for books, space for students to study.
- Librarians feel that they work in isolation.
- There is still no central network for books or good communication channels for librarians.
- Librarians feel that they are not respected, but still are expected to provide student supervision
- Layout of libraries not always conducive to effective learning
- Libraries rely on parent volunteers and often find themselves understaffed

Librarians would like to:

- be empowered so that they can develop libraries in school
- not feel that they are less important than teachers but part of the pedagogical team
- be able to demonstrate their expertise as learning specialists
- be information mediators
- be recognised as reading experts able to give advice to all ages and abilities
- promote information literacy - ie researching and handling information from all sources
- see their work more integrated with the curriculum
- be more creative when facing challenges
- help students develop their learning skills
- help motivate students
- have influence within the school community - ie with pupils, teachers, directors and parents
- be part of policy making groups (SAC, education councils etc)

- work less in isolation from the rest of the school
- have better personal contact with teachers (in staff room etc)
- be better prepared for the new digital information world.

Recommendations:

- Conduct surveys: teachers and what they want and expectations, pupils' reading preferences, pupils' expectations
- Primary and Secondary libraries should be promoted as a single unit
- Team work between primary and secondary librarians are key for continuity for pupils
- One set of rules
- Use class projects to develop a programme of work to promote the value of collaboration with teachers
- Be seen as an education advisory service
- Guidelines and procedural policies could be standardised by working group to highlight best practice.
- Libraries should adapt their policies to suit local needs
- Library policies should be synchronised with school policy so there is no conflict in goals and expectations
- become facilitators so that teachers know that it is worthwhile involving librarians

Let teachers, pupils and parents identify themselves with the library by:

- mixing digital technologies with traditional books.
- ensuring that the latest publications are available immediately
- establish a learning environment that helps 'switch on' the pleasure of reading (comfortable chairs etc)
- collaborate with parents to increase reading opportunities
- make parents see libraries as part of the pedagogical system
- Show how the library contributes to the ES philosophy of European citizens and unity in diversity.

Encourage pupils to come to the library by:

- having an open door policy
- smiling
- never saying no
- "this is your library - tell us what you want"
- no negative signs - eg no talking, no eating, no mobiles etc - clear explanation of the need for library rules
- hold events - readings, guest authors, etc
- have frequent exhibitions of art work, and other project work on show

- Have different areas for different things - comfortable and quiet reading area - research area - group work area etc

Next steps:

- Do not wait for Brussels - this takes too long; be pro-active and have a do-it-yourself approach.
- log in to the ES library blog and keep in regular touch with other librarians to share ideas.
- Review and constantly up-date the library profile on the School website.
- Share strategies that work towards making the library the “heart” of the school.

Mrs Wareing, UK inspector in charge of the ES libraries will be writing a full report of the meeting, and these points will be more fully discussed and formalised in the next Library Working Group meeting.

Sarah Winthrop

ESK PA Interparents representative

30th March 2011