

Strategic Plan

Alexandra Enriquez

Library and Information Studies Program, Old Dominion University

LIBS 674 Library Management & Leadership

Dr. Amelia Anderson

March 6, 2022

Introduction to the Library

Cedar Lane Library is located at Cedar Lane School in Vienna, Virginia. Cedar Lane School is a special education center that serves grades 9-12 for students with Individualized Education Plan (IEP), specifically students with emotional or behavioral disabilities, learning disabilities, and students on the autism spectrum. As of February 2022, Cedar Lane has 70 students enrolled (B. Tarantino, personal communication, February 28, 2022). At this time, Cedar Lane Library does not have a mission statement, vision, or strategic plan. The mission and belief statements of Cedar Lane School will serve those purposes.

Cedar Lane School Mission Statement

“The Mission of Cedar Lane is to provide an education where all students can learn skills that will enhance the quality of their life. We strive to ensure the intellectual, personal, and social growth of our students, regardless of their emotional issues. Through a diversified curriculum offered in a safe, consistent and nurturing learning environment, students are given the opportunity to learn strategies and develop skills to change behaviorally and cognitively.” (Cedar Lane School, 2022).

Beliefs

“We believe that success influences self-esteem, attitude, and motivation. These beliefs help to ensure a successful learning experience where students are responsible for themselves as learners striving to achieve their personal best. The Cedar Lane staff, students, and families, and other agencies work together to develop individualized educational programs. These programs encourage self-advocacy and also provide students with vocational opportunities and further resources to become productive members of society” (Cedar Lane School, 2022).

Strategic Planning

Part 1

Cedar Lane School's mission statement is more in line with what I read about mission statements in the course materials. Moran and Morner define a mission statement to be a

“short, succinct statement focusing on the purpose of the organization, its reason for existence, and what it hopes to accomplish” (2017, p.91, Section Mission, para 1). It is clearly stated that Cedar Lane mission is to “provide an education where all students can learn skills that will enhance their quality of life” (Cedar Lane School, 2022). Cedar Lane staff hopes to provide students with opportunities “to learn strategies and develop skills to change behaviorally and cognitively” (Cedar Lane School, 2022).

After reviewing Moran and Morner definition of a vision statement, Cedar Lane’s belief statement serves a similar purpose of being “inspirational; set within a context of the future, it is timeless, and it provides clear decision-making criteria” (2017, p. 90, para 1). Moran and Morner also state that “a vision is never attainable, but something to work toward” (2017, p. 90, para 1). Cedar Lane’s beliefs statement is certainly inspirational because it talks about creating experiences that will support students as they achieve their personal best (Cedar Lane School, 2022). The statement is also set in the context of the future because the school program provides students with “vocational opportunities and further resources to become productive members of society” (Cedar Lane School, 2022). However, this statement is missing any clear decision-making criteria. Also, Cedar Lane staff wants their belief statement to be attainable because it is in the best interests of all the stakeholders for the students to become productive members of society.

As stated previously, there is no strategic plan available for Cedar Lane Library. It can be argued that Cedar Lane Library can make use of Cedar Lane School’s mission and beliefs statement. However, Cedar Lane Library needs a strategic plan in order to fully support Cedar Lane’s goal of creating a “successful learning experience where students are responsible for themselves as learners striving to achieve their personal best” (Cedar Lane School, 2022). It is interesting that within a school that creates daily measured objectives for every student, it does not have a strategic plan for its library. If Cedar Lane Library wants to truly support the school’s mission and beliefs statements, there needs to be “a systematic process of envisioning a

desired future, and translating this vision into broadly defined goals or objectives, and a sequence of steps to achieve that (Moran & Morner, 2017, p. 81, section Definitions).

The authors of School Library Media Center Long-Range Planning Guide for the Massachusetts School Library Media Centers give more information about the importance of establishing “multi-year goals and objectives as well as the measurements you will need to assess progress” (Markuson, Zilonis, & Fincke, p. 43, Section Step 6 Goals and Objectives, paragraph 1). Without progress measuring, the busy daily business that happens in school libraries can outshine the focus on making progress towards goals and objectives (Markuson, Zilonis, & Fincke, p. 43, Section Step 6 Goals and Objectives, paragraph 1). “In order to project where you want to be in the years ahead, it is essential you set goals” (Markuson, Zilonis, & Fincke, p. 43, Section Multi-year Projections - Goals and Objectives, paragraph 1). Since goals are not typically measurable, objectives need to be created and implemented to include an action verb, be measurable, include a time frame, and be attainable (Markuson, Zilonis, & Fincke, p. 43, Section Multi-year Projections - Goals and Objectives, paragraph 3).

Part 2

The student population of Cedar Lane School is very unique. The students who attend Cedar Lane come from all over the western half of Fairfax and come from 16 different base schools (M. King, personal communication, September 22, 2021). Students attending Cedar Lane require additional support in the form of access to clinical support and low student-to-teacher ratios, as well as common classroom and testing accommodations. Data indicates that a third of the student population at Cedar Lane is enrolled in a literacy support class and over half of the population read below grade level (M. King, personal communication, September 22, 2021). Data also indicates lower standardized testing scores, anywhere from 15% to 30%, for Cedar Lane’s student population when compared to a local base high school (M. King, personal communication, September 22, 2021). Many of the students do not have positive perceptions of school, especially when they experience being removed from a general

education environment for a self-contained special education school. In an effort to create more positive and successful experiences at school, Cedar Lane Library should create a plan to establish an activity space within the library.

The proposed idea for Cedar Lane School Library is to create an activity space within the library. This space would include both a makerspace and an activity center. The makerspace could include items such as legos, yarn and knitting tools, a 3D printer, and collage materials. The activity center could include items such as board games, coloring books, drawing paper, and other related supplies. Before creating the makerspace and activity center, staff and students should be polled about the types of activities and creative opportunities they would be interested in having access to in the library. Weeding of some library books might need to happen to create space, but providing a space where students can create and engage with each other in positive ways would go a long way to nurturing a participatory culture, as pointed out by Fleming in her article about alternative to renovating school libraries (2017, section 3 Nurture a participatory culture, para 1).

Providing a makerspace and activity center allows the library to support both the school's mission and belief statement. Cedar Lane mission statement states that the Cedar Lane community strives "to ensure the intellectual, personal, and social growth of our students" (Cedar Lane School, 2022). A makerspace and activity center would allow students to grow personally and socially as they engage in creative endeavors and engage with their peers. Such a space would also help support Cedar Lane's belief statement by providing a space where they can learn more about their interests and passions so the students themselves can strive "to achieve their personal best" (Cedar Lane School, 2022). Giving the students a space where they can explore interests that can develop into passions is a wonderful way for students to achieve their personal best because they can increase students' levels of engagement and motivation to be successful in school.

This proposed idea best supports the needs of the students who attend Cedar Lane School. Given the high rates of low test scores and reading below grade level, it could be argued that a focus on improving access and usage of information literacy skills is a better course of action. However, improving student confidence in themselves and building a strong sense of community among the students is a necessary step that needs to be taken before trying to improve reading and test scores. Cedar Lane School struggles with high student absenteeism, with averages between 20-30% each day (B. Tarantino, personal communication, February 28, 2022). Cedar Lane Library can create a place and opportunities, in a space that is currently barely used, for students to explore their interests, and create positive experiences at school, which will hopefully help students see that school is a place that helps them achieve their goals.

References

- Cedar Lane School. (2022). *About Us*. FCPS. <https://cedarlaneschool.fcps.edu/about>
- Fleming, L. (2017, January 24). Planning on renovating your library? Think again. *Worlds of Learning*.
- Markuson, C., Zilonis, M. F., & Fincke, M. B. (1999). School library media center planning guide. Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Retrieved from: <https://www.masslibsystem.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolStrategicPlanning.pdf>
- Moran, B. B., & Morner, C. J. (2017). *Library and information center management* (9th ed.). ABC-CLIO.