

Crestview Elementary School Library

Collections Analysis

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LIBS 658: Knowledge Resources: Planning, Selecting & Managing Collections

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March 13, 2021

Introduction

Crestview Elementary School is a small school, serving 325-400 students, from preschool through grade 5 (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.a). Crestview's student population remains diverse with approximately half of the population consisting of Hispanic, Black, Asian, or multiracial students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). Crestview also continues to serve a number of English Language Learners and students with disabilities (Virginia Department of Ed, n.d.a; Virginia Department of Ed, n.d.b). Crestview has full accreditation, achieving at least 79% of students passing English and Mathematics SOLs for each of the last 3 years (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.b). However, there is a noticeable decrease in the passing rate among Hispanic students and English Language Learners. This discrepancy holds true across all SOLs, though the gap is increased for English and Mathematics. Crestview is home to one school library with a full-time librarian and part-time library assistant. Each grade level has weekly time in the library for instruction and/or check-out, in addition to open checkout throughout the day.

Policies & Procedures

As a member of Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS), Crestview shares a library mission with the remaining branches as the mission statement and collection policies are set by the Henrico County School Board and division leadership. This mission is to "empower students to Think, Create, Share, and Grow in the school library as they learn to harness curiosity, model responsibility, inspire exploration, promote creativity, and deepen understanding. School libraries create equity and prepare all learners for college, career, and life" (Henrico County Schools Public Libraries, n.d.a.).

HCPS libraries, including Crestview, provide access to materials within the library without charge (Henrico County Public Schools, 2020). Overdue books and materials may lead to a temporary block on student checkout privileges. Students are typically charged fines and / or replacement fees, though individual schools and librarians may waive these in extenuating circumstances. Elementary school students are allowed to check out 3-5 books at a time. They may be blocked from checking out additional books until one is returned. Students with account blocks are able to peruse materials within the library, but not check out additional items until books are returned or fines/costs paid.

The HCPS library system uses the Sirsi online catalog, which allows students and staff to search their school, a specific other school, different levels of school, or the entire HCPS library system. It also features several lists that users can browse. For digital items, HCPS uses SORA by Overdrive, which is available online and on mobile devices. Students who are not able to visit the library, such as during COVID-19 school closures, are able to use a Google Form to request materials for pick-up from the library.

Additional digital resources and databases are maintained by HCPS. This includes resources such as Britannica Online Encyclopedia, Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopedia of Virginia, Gale in Context, PebbleGo, and a half-dozen other similar digital resources (Henrico County Public School Libraries, n.d.b). These resources are available for students from any internet-connected device.

Selection Policy

The HCPS collection policy is available in the HCPS Policies & Regulation manual online (Henrico County Public Schools, 2019). It includes providing “materials that will stimulate

growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards” while supporting the curriculum (para. A). It also discusses providing material that respects “the varied interest, ability and maturity levels of the pupils”, “on opposing sides of controversial issues”, and with diverse representation regarding religion, ethnicity, and cultural groups, and place. It closes by discussing the importance of placing “principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice” when developing a comprehensive collection.

Additionally, the regulations further discuss how individual items are prioritized and selected, encouraging first hand examination of materials whenever possible (para. D). Librarians and instructional staff are asked to consider purpose, subject, quality, readability, reputation of the author, artist, format, cost, support of the curriculum, and age or developmental appropriateness. The policy then further details items that are included or excluded specifically for “religion, cultures, ideologies, sex education, sex, profanity, science and anti-bullying or suicide prevention” (para. D-4). For example, the policy states that profanity does not disqualify a selection, though “care is taken to exclude materials using profanity in a lewd manner” (para. D-4-F). Requests from faculty, staff, or students are prioritized. Challenges to the collection are first addressed by the school librarian and administration (para I). If it is not able to be resolved at this level, challenges can be officially submitted for review by the Instructional Materials Review Committee, which uses the HCPS selection policy to review whether materials “support the educational program” (para I-4-C). The committee makes a recommendation to the School Board. Any decision by the School Board stands for four years.

Collection Demographics

The Crestview Elementary School library moved into a new space three years ago, which was approximately 50% smaller. There is a space for classes or groups to gather at either end of the room. Three of the walls are lined with shelves, with an additional set of three shelves in the center of the room. The smaller size created a need to downsize the collection, as well as some physical barriers to access due to space restrictions. The addition of shorter shelves has improved access for younger students, with themed baskets and easy access for browsing. Informal policy of the Crestview library encourages inclusion and access for all students through flexible seating, freedom of movement, and unrestricted access to the collection for even our littlest, most sensory dysregulated learners. Students are encouraged to access the library throughout the school day or gather in groups to collaborate.

Currently, the library holds 3,068 printed books, including fiction, non-fiction, picture books, comic books, and graphic novels. The physical collection also includes a DVD collection (80 titles) and a small number of magazine titles (fewer than 20). The DVDs are searchable via the catalog, but are not typically available in open stacks. All of the shelves are currently at or near capacity and any new materials must include weeding or storage of previously held items. The recent downsizing has limited the ability to hold realia, technology, or other physical objects that previously were available for students or staff. There are a small number of “Makerspace” activities available for use in the library or check outs (e.g., Osmo activities, Sphere-O, etc). Other materials for individual projects (e.g., construction paper, art supplies) may be stored in the librarian’s office or used in collaboration with the art teacher. The library has 5 iPads for individual and group use, but does not have computers for access. Henrico is now a 1:1 device school system and students may bring their own devices to the library.

Through Sora, Crestview students have access to more than 4,500 ebooks and 1,500 audiobooks. As part of the Henrico County Public Schools' network, Crestview students also have access to the wide variety of digital resources listed earlier, such as Britannica Online Encyclopedia of Britannica ImageQuest (Henrico County Public School Libraries, n.d.b). Digital videos are available for viewing on student accounts, using YouTube, BrainPop & BrainPop Jr, Gale in Context, etc, but there is no access to video resources similar to Kanopy or Hoopla. At this time, neither the physical collection nor the digital collection includes music for student check-out.

Random Sample

Random sampling was completed in the Crestview Elementary School library on February 26, 2021, as part of the analysis of the diversity of the collection, specifically Latinx representation. 24.8% of students at Crestview identify as Hispanic, with this subgroup demonstrating significantly decreased pass rates on standardized testing in comparison to other Crestview students. The question was asked: "Does this book feature a Latinx main character?" The fiction chapter book section of the library was used for this sample, consisting of early chapter books and middle grades literature. Every 18th book was pulled (estimated 700 books, divided by 40). Based on the cover, synopsis, or knowledge of the book, a mark was made on the yes/no column. The original estimate of the books was slightly low, as I pulled 67 books. Three books featured Latinx main characters, for a total of 4.4% of the sample (3/67).

Diverse representation in literature is an important part of providing students with both "windows" (ability to see and understand other cultures) and "mirrors" (to see their own self or culture reflected back) in the curriculum. Latinx representation in the library is essential,

especially in a school where there are a large number of Latinx students. It seems all the more important when these students have historically been less successful on standardized testing. Representation increases student enthusiasm and engagement as students feel “seen”, both of which are essential to increasing reading, learning, and serving students well.

Curriculum Mapping

Given Crestview’s history of a high immigrant population in the student community, media on immigration or featuring immigrant stories would be of interest for leisure reading and school projects. Respecting diversity in the community, understanding our own traditions, and respecting others’ are also included in the preschool and first grade Social Sciences curriculum. There are 38 resources in the Crestview library collection featuring immigrants or immigration, with an additional 128 resources available via interlibrary loan at other HCPS elementary schools. At Crestview, there are 21 print books (10 easy reader books, 6 fiction, 4 non-fiction, 1 biography), 9 e-books, 8 audio books, and 0 videos. Within Henrico County Public Schools, there are an additional 92 print books (34 easy reader, 43 fiction, 40 nonfiction, 5 biography), 2 audio books, and 3 videos (DVD format). The print books include both early and upper elementary school levels. Three of the books in the Crestview collection are written in the Spanish language. Fiction texts included both contemporary and historical fiction. The books from Crestview primarily featured Asian, Southeast Asian, and Latin American immigrants. The books from the larger HCPS library included Asian, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Russian, European, African, Muslim, and Jewish immigrants.

Crestview’s Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities all performed worse on the Mathematics SOL tests in 2019-2020 than their peer

groups during that same time period. Geometry -- shapes, polygons, area, perimeter -- is a common subject across the K-5 SOLs, as well as an important part of the preschool Foundation Blocks. Within Crestview, there are: 22 print books (including 1 teacher text, 7 easy reader books, 14 non-fiction), 6 e-books, 0 audio books, and 0 videos. Within Henrico County Public Schools, there are an additional: 138 print books (36 teacher texts, 6 easy reader, 1 fiction, 93 non-fiction, 2 bibliography), 2 magazines, 4 learning kits, and 6 videos (DVD format). The print books in the Crestview collection primarily served PK-1 with early reader texts and books on shapes. None of these books were available in the Spanish language. Books from the larger HCPS library community included bibliographies of mathematicians, problem-solving adventure texts, and non-fiction at upper elementary levels (e.g., discussions of perimeter and area).

The collection of resources on immigration does not seem to support the Crestview community needs. Less than 0.7% of the print collection features stories of immigrants, despite the high diversity of students. There were also key missing texts, ethnicities, and/or cultures that other elementary school libraries had. Similarly, there were a limited number of texts related to geometry, with the vast majority consisting of early learning shape texts. While additional books are accessible via interlibrary loan, heavy reliance on ILL can be a barrier to access for important stories that represent their lives -- especially for our younger students. There are also limited e-books, audiobooks, and videos to meet the needs of different learning styles, English language learners, reluctant readers, or learners with disabilities. There were also fewer fictional texts, which may limit student access to these stories outside of school assignments.

There are 4 reference databases available to search for additional information. They include Britannica Online Encyclopedia, Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopedia of Virginia, and Gale in Context. Other informational sites available to students include PebbleGo, BrainPop, and BrainPop Jr.

Collection Analysis

A well-developed collection is a collection that is thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of its community of users, while also serving the organization's mission (Johnson, 2018). It also includes a variety of formats and materials to increase accessibility; this is especially true in Crestview's community with many English language learners and students with disabilities. The current collection does not meet the definition of well-developed. There are strengths in Spanish-language material in some areas, with 80+ titles in Spanish throughout the collection. However, weaknesses were found across all three areas evaluated. The collection did not have sufficient Latinx representation, resources around immigration, or geometry (with math being an area of weakness for the school across multiple demographic groups). With Latinx representation, a 2018 evaluation of children's literature found an overall 5% Latinx representation, which was deemed to be too low (SLJ Staff, 2019). This collection did not even hit that benchmark, despite having a large Latinx / Hispanic population. With immigration, the collection did not have depth or variety in the cultural groups represented, nor did it have sufficient resources across genres. There were similar limitations in geometry, with a heavy skew towards the youngest learners. The library's collection emphasizes print media, lacking the access to teacher's materials, learning kits, audio, or DVDs that are available at other libraries within the HCPS system. This lack of variety impacts access for reluctant readers, English

language learners, students with disabilities, and students who have different learning needs, all of whom are part of the Crestview community.

With discrepancies among achievement (as measured by standardized testing) across all SOL areas, the collection would benefit from strengthening this access, as well as being more reflective of the community that it serves. This could be accomplished by focusing on increasing Latinx representation in fictional texts, increasing the diversity of immigration stories, increasing upper elementary and Spanish-language texts in mathematics, as well as ensuring these increases include both print and digital materials.

Summary

Crestview Elementary School serves an incredibly diverse community, including recent or first generation immigrants, English language learners, students with disabilities, and others. These students come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs. For the library to serve these students well -- and support their curricular progress -- the collection must reflect the diversity of their experiences. Materials must be available in a variety of formats, easily accessible to even our youngest learners. By increasing diversity and accessibility, the Crestview library can “create equity” and take additional steps to “harness curiosity, model responsibility, inspire exploration, promote creativity, and deepen understanding” for all students (HCPS Libraries, n.d.a). In turn, this will support the student community, including the Hispanic student community, to be more engaged with the library, successful in their classes, and to demonstrate that success on end-of-year assessments.

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