**Collaboration- Who has time for that????**

**By: Jessica Thomas, NBCT, Greenwood Elementary Librarian**

When this school year started, I reflected on how busy librarians and teachers in our district are. When I switched schools at Thanksgiving break and became the new librarian at Greenwood Elementary, my goal this year was to have my teachers maximize the benefit of having me (their librarian) at their disposal to increase student engagement and teach their students to use library resources effectively to become 21st century learners. I wanted to create processes and products that wouldn’t require teachers to lose time, money, resources, or have changes in their schedule or planning time and allow them to collaborate with me.

Over the summer, I opened my email and saw an application from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards to join the Classroom Teachers Enacting Positive Solutions Team (CTEPS). Teachers were encouraged to join the team to create and work on a project you were passionate about and thought might change the culture or thinking of the students or teachers in your school/district/state of Kentucky. Since this was my first year at Greenwood Elementary, I knew this was the perfect opportunity to become a leader in my school. I wanted to become more of a leader by creating collaboration opportunities for my teachers that would make their lives easier and make students’ learning more engaging and rich in technology and resources.

Here were a few ways I worked to support collaboration at Greenwood:

* Creating a Lib Guide that can be accessed and used at home or school by both our students and teachers. This website has links to our OPAC/Library World system so that they can see what books we have in the library, suggested websites for different units of study, websites for students to further their education at home, a list of new books and supplies we get in the library, Symbaloo pages (webpages centered around specific subjects of study that allow students to click on safe searches), research links, and much more! To check out our school Lib Guide click below:

<http://jcpsky.libguides.com/greenwoodlibrary>

* Creating forms for teachers to fill out requesting materials, books or online resources that they need for upcoming units or lessons so that I can find those resources for them. This helps me know what units they are working on so I can incorporate them in library and allows me to offer resources they maybe wouldn’t have found otherwise.
* Setting the stage for Professional Development opportunities in the library by discussing the importance of bringing in outside sources with a fresh eye for technology and literacy with my principal. So far we have had a KET PD at our school, but next year, I plan to set up a donuts and coffee PD once a month for teachers, so that they can have time to learn about new resources in the library, how to find books, how to use our library catalog, and to learn about new ways to collaborate.
* Sending out monthly tips and tricks from your librarian via email- The goal of these emails are to give teachers some quick ideas about units of study, good websites and books to use, and collaboration tips.

This process has been both challenging and engaging, but it is enduring. Thankfully, I had a good foundation built from the past librarian and it made it easier to continue the collaboration process between the teachers and the librarian (me). This process has empowered me as a leader, and I realize that in order to continue becoming a stronger leader, I must continue to modify my collaboration process throughout the entirety of my career. Since this is my first year at Greenwood, I feel as if teachers and students were hesitant to collaborate with me at the beginning of the year. Now students come to help me in the library during their recess instead of going outside, teachers come to me asking for resources and advice, and parents come to me to tell me how much their children are enjoying the library. They are beginning to see that collaborating with me is not a grueling process, but a very beneficial one. Here are a few examples of how collaboration helped my school:

Ms. Logsdon, a fourth grade teacher says, “My students are excited and look forward to going to library every week! Their independence has grown drastically in finding "just right" books and Mrs. Thomas and I are able to communicate on student needs, topics, and ultimately do what is best to continue to push students further in reading.”

Ms. Henderson, a fifth grade teacher says, “Students are excited about going to library. They not only enjoy checking out books of their interests, but also enjoy the various centers, games, and activities they are engaged in while there.  Students love spending time in the library outside of their normal class time, assisting Mrs. Thomas in anyway needed, which can be attributed to the strong relationships she built with students when first coming to Greenwood.”

I am challenging all JCPS teachers: Ask your librarians about Lib Guides, ask your librarians for books you want, or ask your librarians to collaborate on projects you are doing in your room. No one should feel isolated in teaching. A librarian’s greatest role is to be a collaborating partner for both teachers and students. We are trained professionals and we believe in teachers and the power of collaboration. Let us help you. All you have to do is ask.