# The Dual Nature of Staffing in the Education Library: Management Issues and Solutions

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**Abstract**

The dual nature of staffing in the education library, just as in most academic libraries, often constitutes a major source of management problems. The blurring and shifting of tasks for professionals and paraprofessionals, and budgetary constraints do not help the situation. Professionals and paraprofessionals must work in concert and in harmony, pulling in the same direction. This article identifies and discusses some enabling variables that can help the education library leader build a well-integrated staff team of professionals and paraprofessionals who work towards a common goal in a supportive workplace environment.

## Introduction

Education libraries, like other academic libraries, are staffed by both professionals and paraprofessionals. This dual nature of staffing often constitutes a major source of management problems. The labels -- professional and paraprofessional -- assigned to distinguish these two groups of employees have not helped to ease the tension, animosity, and distrust that sometimes exist among members of both groups.

This tension has increased as the roles of professionals and paraprofessionals have become quite complicated and less distinctive as they used to be. "Over the past twenty or more years, automation of library processes, declining budgets, contraction of higher education generally, and entry into the electronic information age have changed libraries. New library tasks have been created and others re-aligned."[1] Tasks once seen as exclusively professional are now been shared with, or assigned to, paraprofessionals, and there is a growing emphasis on paraprofessionals as managers, especially of day-to-day operations. "In library literature the term 'routine' is frequently used to differentiate between the work done by librarians and paraprofessionals. This distinction seems inappropriate to the jobs held by a growing number of paraprofessionals whose responsibilities require sophisticated judgment calls, supervision, and complex operations."[2] Furthermore, many paraprofessionals come into positions with significant academic credentials and experience; some paraprofessionals in the education library have academic degrees in education and have even been classroom teachers in an earlier career. Even though there are still some tasks that require professional knowledge and skills, some paraprofessionals might believe that there is no difference in what they and the professionals do. Such practices can lead to hard feelings on the part of the paraprofessionals,

The performance of any organization or unit is judged by the level of productivity and by the quality of the outcome. For the education library to become and remain a high performing unit the professionals and the paraprofessionals must "work in concert and in harmony. They need to be harnessed and pulling in the same direction, not in different ones."[3] The importance of building an effective, strong, and well-integrated staff team cannot be overrated. In the article "The Basics of Team Building" a team is defined as "a group of people working towards a common goal. Team building is the process of enabling that group of people to reach their goal. It is therefore a management issue…"[4] Consequently, the leader in the education library becomes a very crucial factor in uniting professionals and paraprofessionals into a cohesive, goal focused, and happy team. He/she has to devise a plan to influence, motivate, and lead all staff and get them to work together well. There are certain variables which if well managed under the direction and leadership of the head of the education library could remove inhibitors and promote enablers in coalescing professionals and paraprofessionals into an effective team, even in this time of change. This article identifies and discusses variables that can help the

leader create group synergy in the education library, influence and inspire all employees to voluntarily perform at a high level on a consistent basis and enjoy doing it, and to make goal realization a reality.

### Establishing a Shared Purpose

The head of the education library should provide the leadership needed to coordinate the activities of all the staff towards attaining predetermined goals, which give the staff a sense of direction and purpose. Goals should exist as living written documents that are revisited regularly and appropriately revised as the education library grows and changes. It should be made up of three component parts: vision, mission, and task list. As Ankarb rightly puts it, the vision "frames" the work of the team. The vision is a "preferred future state, a bridge from today to tomorrow"[5] The mission helps the education library plan how it is going to get to that desired future, and should be stated in clear, measurable terms so that the library knows when it gets to where it wants to go.

All the professionals and paraprofessionals should collaborate to:
1. determine the purpose of the education library;
2. agree on a mission statement;
3. identify the core tasks necessary to reach the predetermined goal.

As Avery stated, a working team needs to "establish shared clarity. Discuss … the mission, the deliverables, and the outcome of [the] team's work until [members] can articulate together a common and clear description of [the team's] purpose." [6] A purpose statement should be straightforward and brief, the results of all professionals and paraprofessionals developing it. All education library staff should spend adequate time listening to each other and working until they can reach an agreement on statements that each can live with and support. "Purpose and principle, clearly understood and articulated, and commonly shared, are the genetic code of any healthy organization. To the degree that [the team] holds purpose and principles in common among [members], [the team] can dispense with command and control. People will know how to behave in accordance with them, and they'll do it in thousands of unimaginable, creative ways. The organization will become a vital, living set of beliefs."[7] The vision statement should be

posted prominently so that staff members constantly remind themselves of what they are striving for. The education library should creatively share and use the purpose and vision in as many ways as possible such as on the education library web page, the logo, and letterhead.

The shared goal or goals should be realistic, feasible, attainable, inspiring, and challenging. The human and material resources needed to attain the goal are vital variables when developing and setting the shared goals. If the goal is too ambitious and beyond the efforts of the human and material resources available, staff get frustrated, disillusioned, and may give up trying. The staff may also break up into opposing camps of professionals and paraprofessionals, blaming each other. But when the goal is reasonably high, challenging but attainable, all staff can join forces, focus on the goal, and pull all their efforts together towards attaining the goal. They see the goal as "ours" instead of "theirs". They realize that they need to team up to succeed, and each member of staff is willing and ready to step in and perform whatever is needed to be done for the education library to arrive at the target goals.

### Establishing Role Clarification and Responsibilities

Some tasks require professional knowledge, skills, and expertise; whenever possible, professionals should let paraprofessionals know some of the "real" professional tasks they do. Other tasks can be performed competently by paraprofessionals, who should be valued for their contributions to overall library services. Thus the roles and tasks for professionals and paraprofessionals be defined and that each employee knows the tasks he/she is being held accountable for. This would enhance peaceful collaboration, task performance, and productivity.

Basically, the education library exists to provide teacher education majors the resources, services, and assistance they need to meet both the state and national requirements and standards. Accreditation agencies and state certification office are very interested in how prospective teachers are prepared for their jobs in the real classroom. It is a general belief that, given the right conditions and resources, all children can learn. Towards that end, the

education library has to provide teacher education majors the resources and services they need to learn and to become experts in presenting and packaging learning materials in a way that makes concept mastery and effective learning a reality for all students, even all students in the inclusive classroom. Both professionals and paraprofessionals in the education library need to collaborate in providing the resources and services necessary to meet those needs..

## Education Library Functions

For peaceful coexistence and collaboration, professionals and paraprofessionals need to know not just what they are expected to do, but also why they are to do it, and when and how it must be done. Hence, team-building procedures for accomplishing tasks must be developed and adopted. Ideally, the entire education library employees should meet to discuss the task that needs to be done. If it is not possible to have all staff meet, care should be taken to ensure that employees who will have to implement the procedure understand the task and see the rationale for determining how the task will be done. Whenever possible, conditions should be established to guide instances when the prescribed procedure that should be followed routinely becomes impossible. The adopted procedure should be reviewed at reasonable intervals to check for adequacy and currency. The leader should ensure that procedures that stifle employees or that put unnecessarily constraints on staff are avoided.

*Needs Assessment*
In order to provide an optimal education library program, needs assessments must be conducted and analyzed regularly. "Needs assessment serves as a systematic diagnostic tool to carefully and to cautiously identify what the clienteles need, what the thrust of the collection should be, and what the librarian should be doing to effectively and efficiently meet patrons' needs."[8] Most of the activities required for effective needs assessment for building and maintaining a responsive and functional collection are the responsibilities of the professional librarians. For example. they
- conduct environmental scan
- analyze available records and statistics
- develop, administer, analyze, and interpret surveys

- interview different focus groups of potential clienteles
- know the resources required by the state, specialty professional areas such as International Reading Association (IRA), and accreditation agencies, such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and translate those requirements into library resources and services
- keep current on trends, issues, and practices in the field of teacher education and instruction material collections
- develop, evaluate, and manage the instructional materials collections.

Though professionals are primarily responsible for these tasks enumerated above, paraprofessionals may assist with some of them, such as distributing survey instruments. They clearly know that the professionals are in control of the survey. Likewise, after analysis of the data collected, both professionals and paraprofessionals can brainstorm the best ways to use the information gained to improve library activities and operations. Because every employee's input is solicited and is appropriately used in modifying library activities a sense of ownership and commitment – and a feeling of "we" – is experienced by both paraprofessionals and professionals.

*Selecting Materials for Acquisition*
"Collection development has always been about making choices."[9] Some of the tasks involved in material selection require professional knowledge while others do not. For example the professionals are responsible for:
- Knowing the curricular offerings in the College of Education
- Knowing how the collection will be used
- Assessing the collection and identifying its suitability
- Knowing when to request for copies for preview
- Assessing the adequacy of the contents of the materials
- Evaluating the treatment and presentation of subject matter
- Assessing the coverage in terms of scope and depth, and
- Assessing the value of the special features such as images, charts, tables, etc.

Paraprofessionals know that they can suggest materials for acquisition, but they know that the

final selection decision rests with professionals. Paraprofessionals assist professionals in verifying information about materials, locate reviews, and prepare materials for use. As paraprofessionals assume specific procedural roles to support professional librarians the ensuing relationship is cordial, supportive, nurturing, and enabling because each employee knows the tasks he/she is responsible for. When there is a healthy balance between assignment of tasks and interdependence, staff interact and the education library staff team functions smoothly.

*Reference Desk Duties*
Library budget constraints have made it impossible for most education libraries to have a professional librarian on duty on the reference desk to provide quality services at all times the library doors are opened. Moreover, some professional librarians may have fewer hours at the physical reference desk because they are heavily involved in providing reference services electronically. As a result, librarians increasingly have to schedule more consultation sessions and work with patrons by appointment. There is no consensus among librarians on the issue of assigning non-professional librarians to staff the reference desk. Sometimes there is double coverage when both types of staff are scheduled to work on the reference desk. But when a paraprofessional works alone on the desk, a professional librarian should be "on call," readily available when professional expertise is needed. Additionally, the paraprofessional on the desk is not left completely on his/her own recourseif He/she has access to professionally-developed library web pages containing useful information to answer frequently asked reference questions.. In the event that the paraprofessional has problem locating information to answer patron questions or he/she feels that the question is not being adequately answered by him/her, the professional librarian "on call" can be consulted to work with the patron on the reference desk, on the public workstation, in the stacks, or in his/her office. Consequently there is collaboration and consultation in the provision of reference services to patrons. Providing quality reference services becomes the product of both professionals and paraprofessionals working together as an effective work team. Scheduling makes it possible for them to join forces and work for a common goal.

*Instruction*
In recent times instructing patrons on how to access and use materials has acquired great significance. Because both types of employees work on the reference desk, paraprofessionals are offered staff development sessions on how to provide relevant point-of-need instruction to patrons. By building on other library functions, the roles of professionals and paraprofessionals vis-à-vis instruction can be such that it is safe for staff to seek assistance and to pursue self-development.

## Decision-Making

Decision-making is a choice process which if properly undertaken has the potential to make the professionals and paraprofessionals to come together as a team to earnestly seek and choose the best solutions to problems. It involves choosing from among alternatives. Decision-making is a rational activity that involves going through a logical sequence of decision making steps. These steps include:
1. Problem definition. It involves "sizing up" the situation. The library staff recognize a problem or opportunity, describe it, and make a diagnosis;
2. Problem Analysis. This is when the staff "dissect" the problem or issue in an attempt to gain a clearer understanding of the problem before trying to solve it;
3. Thinking of alternatives. The staff brainstorm for possible alternative solutions to the problems or issues;
4. The staff arrive on a consensus on the best solution after weighing the pros and cons of each alternative;
5. The staff team translates the chosen decision into effective action. The necessary procedure for implementing and for enforcing the decision is designed; and
6. The staff develop a monitoring and assessment system for the effectiveness and efficiency of the decision.

Patton states that in group decision-making process, decisions are the product of interpersonal decision processes and group dynamics. The head of the education library "must be concerned with leading the group from a collection of individuals to a collaborative decision making unit."[10] He/she should also be alert and prevent a situation where the staff are divided along professional and paraprofessional lines to make decisions. On the other hand, group

think should be avoided. Groupthink "happens when in-group pressures lead to a deterioration in mental efficiency, poor testing of reality, and lax moral judgments. It tends to happen in highly cohesive groups in which group member's desire for consensus becomes more important than evaluating problems and solutions realistically."[11] There are several decision making techniques that could enhance the coalescence of professionals and paraprofessionals as a result of collaborative and participatory decision making.

*Brainstorming*
Brainstorming is an excellent group decision making technique that enables a group to come up with as many creative and imaginative alternatives and solutions as possible to problems. It encourages group members to focus on the problem, think out of the box, and come up with radical solutions. In brainstorming, ideas and the analysis and evaluation of the ideas are separated. As ideas are generated, often in quick succession, they are recorded and are later evaluated for efficacy and feasibility. The primary idea is to generate as many alternatives as possible. Evaluating alternatives as they are suggested could stunt idea generation and creativity.

*Nominal Group Technique*
Nominal group technique is a structured process which encourages group members to nominally generate solutions and ideas for solving the target problem or issue. Members are instructed to think and work independently. The nominally generated ideas and alternative solutions to problems are recorded on a chalk board or flip chart. They are then discussed to ensure that all members understand the recorded ideas or solutions. Then each member secretly ranks the potential of each idea to solve the problem. The highest ranking idea is then chosen. This strategy is particularly useful because each suggested solution or idea gets equal consideration, which can reduce the errors in aggregating individual judgments into group decisions.

*Devil's Advocacy*
Devil's advocacy is a strategy to poke holes in a decision. An individual or subgroup is appointed to critique a decision and identify problems to consider before the decision is finally taken. Though devil's advocacy is not purely a decision making technique, it helps the group analyze and validate the strength of alternative solution to a problem.

*Six Thinking Hats*
Six thinking hats technique is a strategy to look at a problem, alternative solutions, and the decision made from as many perspectives and view points as possible. Each thinking hat represents a different approach to thinking and problem-solving. Edward de Bono created this tool. He identified these six thinking hats. [12]

| Hat (Perspective) | Description |
|---|---|
| **White (Observer)** | White paper; Neutral; focus on information available, objective FACTS, what is needed, how it can be obtained |
| **Red (Self, Other)** | Fire, warmth; EMOTIONS, FEELINGS, intuition, hunches; present views without explanation, justification |
| **Black (Self, Other)** | Stern judge wearing black robe; judgmental; critical; why something is wrong; LOGICAL NEGATIVE view; makes plans "tougher" and more resilient |
| **Yellow (Self, Other)** | Sunshine; optimism; LOGICAL POSITIVE view; looks for benefits, what's good. |
| **Green (Self, Other)** | Vegetation; CREATIVE thinking; possibilities and hypotheses; new ideas |
| **Blue (Observer)** | Sky; cool; overview; CONTROL of PROCESS, STEPS, OTHER HATS; chairperson, organizer; thinking about thinking |

The Blue Hat is worn by the individual chairing the decision-making meeting. When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, he/she may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, he/she will ask for Black Hat thinking, etc.[13] De Bono suggests steps for using the six thinking hats group decision making strategy.

They are:

Step 1: Present the facts of the case -- White Hat

Step 2: Generate ideas on how the case could be handled -- Green Hat

Step 3: Evaluate the merits of the ideas—
- List the benefits -- Yellow Hat
- List the drawbacks -- Black Hat

Step 4: Get everybody's gut feelings about the alternatives -- Red Hat

Step 5: Summarize and adjourn the meeting -- Blue Hat [14]

*PMI: Weighing the Pros and Cons and Implications of a Decision*

PMI stands for Plus/Minus/Implications. This process enables the group to logically weigh the pros, cons, and implications of the group's decision and plan under consideration using visual representations. For example, the group draws a 3-T chart or table, and label the columns Plus, Minus, and Implication. All aspects – advantages, disadvantages, and implications -- of a proposed decision are recorded under the appropriate column, and given positive or negative scores. Based on the sum of the scores, employees decide to choose or to reject the candidate decision.

|  | PLUS | MINUS | IMPLICATION | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | POSITIVE | NEGATIVE |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL |  |  |  |  |

*Grid Analysis*

Grid analysis is particularly good for making a decision when the team has some really good alternatives and many variables to consider before making its choice. Alternative solutions are visually represented and assigned individual weights based on relative importance. The alternatives are designated as row labels, and the variables are designated as column headings. Each alternative is scored by how adequately it satisfies each of the variables; the score is multiplied by the weight of the variable. The total scores for each alternative are calculated. The team then adopts the alternative with the highest score. Below is an example of a grid analysis table.

|  | Variable 1 | Variable 2 | Variable 3 | Variable 4 | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Weights |  |  |  |  |  |
| Alternative 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Alternative 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Alternative 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Alternative 4 |  |  |  |  |  |

Group decision making strategies and activities make the professionals and the paraprofessionals come together to work as a team to make decisions. They stand behind the chosen alternative because it is the decision of the entire staff. Collaborative, participatory decision-making helps every library staff member believe that he/she is important and that his/her contribution to deciding what happens in the library is significant.

**Confronting and Resolving Conflict**

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two or more employees who are interdependent. While conflict is a natural, vital part of life, the dual nature of staffing in the education library adds another variable into the chances for conflict. Depending on how the differences that threaten to divide members of the education library staff is handled, it could

be destructive or constructive to the smooth running of the library. When conflict is understood, it can become an opportunity to learn and to create. The leader can skillfully use the arguments, disputes, and frustrations staff experience to deepen relationships that promote acceptance, respect, and promote task completion.

Conflict management skills are essential for the head of the education library because conflicts have personal, professional, and organizational effects and are interconnected. Conflicts affect employees' emotions, their thinking process, perception, and their behaviors. If not adequately handled, conflits can adversely affect the quality of education library service -- and the quality of employees' work life and morale.

Education library leader should remember that not all conflicts among professionals and para-professionals can be prevented or resolved. Some conflicts can only be managed with the goal of controlling the adverse impact on the quality of task performance and effectiveness. Still, when conflict occurs, it must be tackled. Avoiding confrontation can prove toxic to the library because it reinforces the destructive cycle of conflict. Often, leaders and employees feel overwhelmed and resign themselves to the idea that avoidance – either by their own silence or by threatening others into silence – is their only avenue.[15] Realistically, conflict management can be viewed as consisting of several related goals.

- Prevent escalation. Escalated conflicts often results in disruptive behaviors. Avoid actions that escalate the conflict, forcing a response – counter-response chain reaction of negative behaviors;
- Solve the real problem. Often the real problem is wall-papered or disguised as something else. Get to the bottom of the situation.
- De-personalize the disagreement. Get employees to think in terms of the situation rather than how hurt their feelings are.
- Invent solutions. Think outside the box, think broadly and creatively.
- Build relationships. Never miss a chance to build a relationship. Share interests, concerns. Inspire trust.
- Achieve workplace goals. Managing conflict does not occur in a personal vacuum.

How you deal with it has broader professional and organizational implications.[16]

The leader can choose from several alternative strategic approaches, based on the situation and the nature of the conflict. Masters and Albright suggest five strategic approaches to conflict. They are:
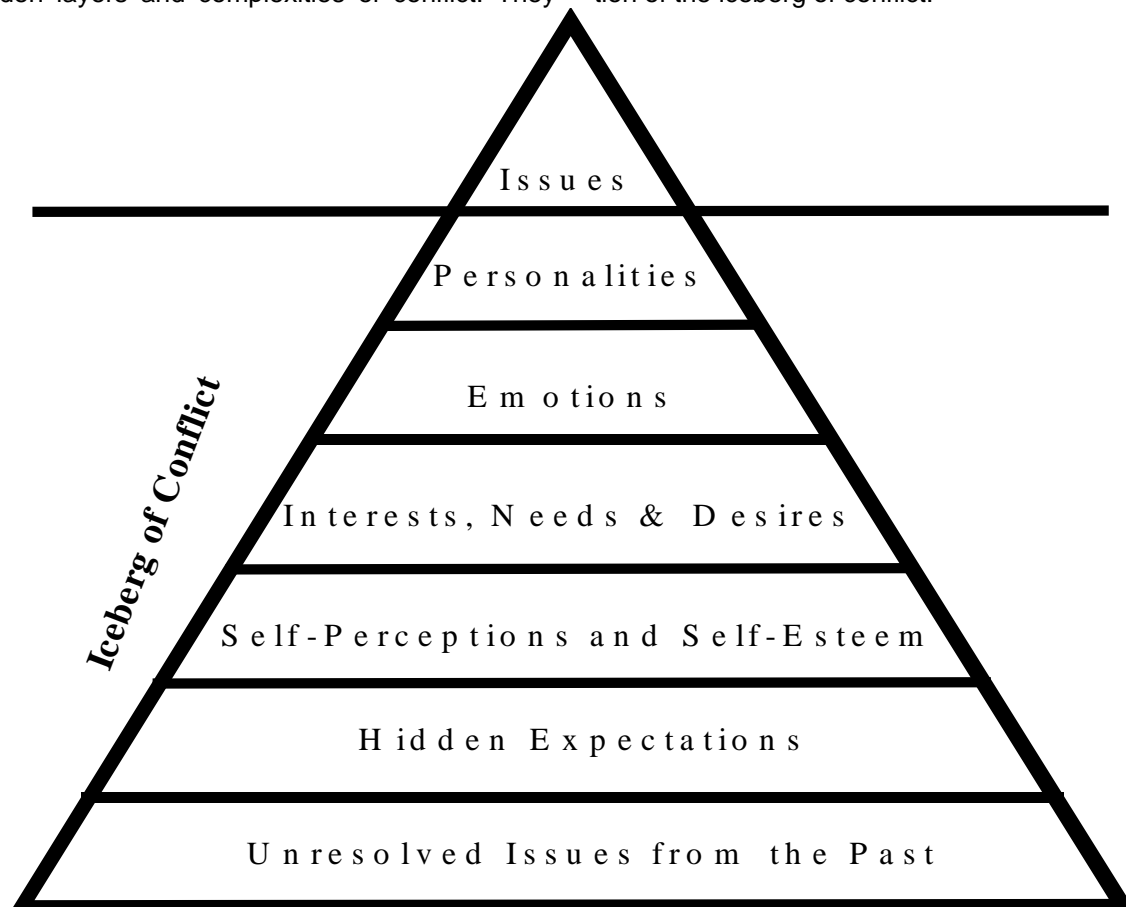
1. Accommodation. A party concedes to the other's position. It is not assertive of own interests or needs or positions.
2. Avoidance. A party ignores, denies, escapes. It is proactive in avoiding confronting the other party or issue.
3. Collaboration. A party seeks a win-win outcome that is naturally satisfactory. It is assertive of own interests and empathizes with the other party's.
4. Competition. A party is selfishly motivated and behaving. It is interested in winning, pure and simple.
5. Compromise. A party is willing to settle for half a loaf. It is inclined to split the difference to get the matter settled if not resolved.[17]

Often during the conflict discussion and negotiation compromise is necessary. Both professionals and paraprofessional should be ready to give up something so as to get something from other staff members. "When people believe their goals are cooperative (We are in this together." "We swim or sink together."), they are committed to promoting each other and helping each other be effective…"[18]

As one views the education library staff as a team formed by professionals and paraprofessionals, participatory conflict management can be effective. Participatory conflict management means that all the affected individuals and parties are invited to join in the process of seeking solution to the conflict. Having all of them present gives credibility to the process and to the genuine desire of the leader to resolve the conflict. However, their mere presence does not necessarily indicate that they wish to resolve the conflict; they may be there just to fulfill a job requirement or may be there just to observe, while they intellectually and emotionally distance themselves from the discussion. The leader should aspire for inclusiven participation: getting the commitment of the affected individuals or parties to come to the meeting, a ready to negotiate, and earnestly seeking a conflict resolution.

The head of the education library should be aware of what Cloke and Goldsmith called hidden layers and complexities of conflict. They capture them through the metaphor of the iceberg. The chart below is a visual representation of the iceberg of conflict.[19]

**Iceberg of Conflict**

Issues

Personalities

Emotions

Interests, Needs & Desires

Self-Perceptions and Self-Esteem

Hidden Expectations

Unresolved Issues from the Past

**A w a r e n e s s   o f   I n t e r c o n n e c t i o n**

The leader of the education library should never let the staff lose sight of their shared common goal which must be the driving force behind every thing they do. The shared purpose controls and tames individual interests, unites the professionals and the paraprofessionals, and promotes the common good.

It could be helpful for the leader to:

- Be sensitive to early signs of conflict.
- Do not hide from conflict -- confront it.
- Know what the conflict is and what it isn't.
- Realize that most conflicts will not go away – tackle them.
- Never lose sight of the shared goals.
- Approach conflict in a way that defuses defensiveness and enhances healthy and frank discussions.

- Do not think that the presence of conflict means the leader is not effective.
- Remember that the team can learn from the current conflict.
- Develop hearing and listening skills.
- Watch employees' body language.
- Encourage staff to change their mindset to encourage appropriate decisions, behaviors, and outcome.
- Seek inclusive participatory conflict resolution and management.
- Recognize the difference between "buy-in" and consensus.
- Know that reconciliation is not always possible;
- As much as possible, make conflict management a win-win situation for all involved.
- Strive to make employees feel safe while confronting and dealing with conflicts.

## Workplace Climate

How professionals and paraprofessionals unite and work hand in hand to attain a common goal reveals that their relationship and may be the single most important variable in the process of building a unified education library staff. When the leader establishes and maintains a workplace climate that fosters high levels of inclusion, affection, acceptance, support, and trust the staff stick together as a unit. When employees feel good about the education library they become committed to the library goals, and would go beyond the call of duty to ensure that the shared purpose is upheld. When the group morale is high, the workplace will be a happy place, services to patrons will be of high quality, employees will go out of their way to help each other, and the workplace will resemble a warm and caring family. As employees spend more time with colleagues, it is crucial that the workplace climate be healthy, nurturing, safe, non-threatening, and welcoming.

Thus, the question becomes, how can the leader create a positive climate that would promote unity and singleness of purpose for professionals and paraprofessionals? There are some factors that impact the workplace climate which the leader needs to be aware of.

*Communication*
Communication is a significant ingredient in the effective interaction within a team. For communication to be effective, the target of information must receive what the speaker really has the intention of transmitting. "In addition to the content of our messages, language conveys feelings. Our voices are colored with emotion and attitude. Add the subtle nuances of pitch and loudness, intonation, rate, facial expression and posture. Now we have a complex pattern of behavior with the power to influence our listeners."[20] Effective communication skills should be encouraged within the education library because they can bind employees together and tear down walls of division. Channels of communication should be established. The leader should ensure that there is a mechanism in place to keep every employee informed of relevant information in a timely fashion; otherwise, those left out may gang up or individually work against the unity of the team. Although the interpretation that each type of staff will have for being left out may differ, any effects may be detrimental to group cohesiveness. Therefore, the leader must guide against situations that precipitate ill feelings.

*Meetings*
Staff meetings should be scheduled and an agenda for each meeting should be distributed before the meeting. This helps each staff member prepare for the meeting, complete assigned tasks to be discussed during the meeting, bring necessary materials and information to the meeting; it also facilitates good time management. During the meeting, contributions should be sought from both professionals and paraprofessionals. The seating arrangement should encourages participation, interaction, and member visibility. Good manners are the lubricating oil of good human relationships; the leader should model and promote proper workplace etiquette and civility, encouraging specific behaviors that help foster a sense of group unity: building up each other, smoothing out misunderstandings between members, enhancing a supportive atmosphere, relieving tension, and promoting individuals' sense of being part of the unit. When employees get along with each other there are few cliques in the workplace.

*Staff Development*
Most tasks require specific tools, expertise, knowledge, and skills. When staff members believe that they have the required knowledge and skills to perform their duties satisfactorily, they feel comfortable and self-confident, and help make the staff team work together cordially. Because the constantly changing nature of library service requires that staff continually update their knowledge and skills, the leader should provide needed training within a systematic staff development program so staff members can continue to feel that they are competent performing their duties. Often a professional librarian is put in charge of the staff development program. Genuine efforts should be made to solicit input about the contents of the program from all staff members; when staff believe their professional growth impacts library service, and feel safe, they will open up and ask for help when they need it. Facilitators for each session should be determined; for some sessions professionals can offer their expertise to the entire staff, and for other sessions paraprofessionals can lead better than professionals. In all cases, staff must be made to feel they are treated as competent and respected human beings, and that the leader and their colleagues have their best interests at heart.

*Motivation*
Motivation is that force and that drive within employees that move them to direct their energies, efforts, and actions towards the attainment of the predetermined goals of the education library. Ulti-

mately, the goal of motivation is performance. The leader is responsible for making each employee feel that his/her contribution to the smooth running of the unit is valued. The leader should ensure that the team engages in activities that building trust and engender mutual respect. Each employee has to believe that his/her interest is being protected. He/she should be given the support needed to be successful and to excel. "Good coaching skills let the leader empower the staff without setting them adrift ... keep them on track without riding hard ... and push them to be their best -- without pushing them too hard."[21] That is when the chances of building a cohesive and collaborating team of professionals and paraprofessionals are high.

*Informal Workplace Relationships*
Staff relationships are the library's true asset. They are the energizing force that tremendously impact the unity and success of the unit. If staff like each other, they will support and look out for each other, and get the job done well. Although the leader cannot make professionals and paraprofessionals like each other, he/she can provide opportunities for them to interact informally and get acquainted to each other, such as:

- Shared lunch. Staff order lunch to be brought into the staff lounge. and all eat together.
- Pizza day.
- Winter Blahs. Staff members sign up to bring in food and share it to brighten the winter months.
- Birthday Celebration. Staff contribute to pay for the celebrant's lunch, and each employee pays for his/her own lunch.
- Delicacies Corner. Staff members bring to work food items they want to get rid of for everyone to enjoy; often there are unhealthy delicacies they do not want to binge on.
- Holiday Dinner. Staff meet off-site, often in a member's house, to usher in the holiday season. Games, gift exchanges, and other festive activities are enjoyed by all staff.

These interactions promote trust, esprit de corps, team spirit, pride, group identity, and motivation. Such teams of professionals and paraprofessional can attain the library goals, and can successfully handle differences and situations that could tear other groups apart.

## Conclusion

A task-focused and cohesive team of professionals and paraprofessionals does not just happen. It takes time, cost, and conscious efforts to establish and to maintain. The complex task of uniting pro-

fessionals and paraprofessionals requires that the team establishes clearly defined roles and responsibilities, handles differences and problems skillfully, builds trust and healthy workplace environment and relationships, and keeps the shared library purpose as the driving force behind all activities. Managing and leading a staff team of professionals and paraprofessionals in a way that promotes collaboration and unity of purpose is a challenge for the library head. The leader has to influence and motivate the staff to join forces to achieve the goal of the library in a congenial atmosphere. When there is synergy between professionals and paraprofessional a formidable work team of individuals with different knowledge and skills is built, bringing together the unique contributions of every member to attain the predetermined goals of the education library. The leader, who skillfully applies the variables discussed in this article, can remove barriers and logjams that can inhibit the staff quality performance and goal realization.

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The theme of the next issue of *Education Libraries* is "The Visual Side of Education Libraries." Some of the potential topics include:

- ➢ **Art collections in education libraries**
- ➢ **Picture books in education libraries**
- ➢ **Public art in education libraries**
- ➢ **Cataloging/indexing visual materials**
- ➢ **Access to audio-visual materials**
- ➢ **Visual aspects of library instruction**
- ➢ **Creating attractive library spaces**
- ➢ **Web page design, including ADA compliance**
- ➢ **Visual factor of public relations**
- ➢ **The professional "look": is it still a factor?**
- ➢ **Visual literacy**

**Can you picture it? Can you write it? Your contributions are welcome. Deadline for submissions is September 15 – something to do this summer.**