

# THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

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A stylized illustration featuring a large, yellow, textured letter 'C' that forms a partial circle. A person with a blue face, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, white pants, and red shoes, stands on the right side of the 'C', pointing towards a white arrow that points right from the top of the letter. Another white arrow points up from the bottom left of the 'C'. The background is a light pink color.

# A MODEL FOR **COLLABORATION** **WITH NEW TEACHERS**



## Introduction

When I was the school librarian and lead teacher mentor, there was a new crop of first-year teachers to meet every year. I relished their enthusiasm and fresh ideas. As a former classroom teacher, I empathized when they felt overwhelmed and discouraged. School librarians play an important role in mentoring these newly hired teachers. Welcoming new teachers to the school library opens doors to collaboration for effective teaching (Morris 2015).

The school librarian is uniquely positioned in a school's social ecology as an instructional leader, collaborative partner, and professional development facilitator (AASL 2018). Working with new teachers differs from working with more experienced educators (Soulen and Wine 2018). Teachers new to the field have specific, defined needs, including developing resilience, managing classes (Johnson et al. 2016), and sustaining their commitment and effectiveness (Day and Gu 2014). School librarians can make a difference in the professional lives of new teachers by adopting a model of mentoring toward collaboration, which can increase resilience.

The National Center for Education Statistics projects that the total number of new teacher hires in the United States will increase 17 percent between 2015 and 2027 (Hussar and Bailey 2019). Many of these early career teachers will struggle with the intensity of school life in contexts over which they have limited control (Johnson et al. 2016). However, support from the school community can create conditions and practices where new teachers thrive.

By developing relationships based on mutual trust, respect, and care (Johnson et al. 2016), school librarians in individual practice may take social responsibility for the

development of new teachers. Establishing trust requires an investment of time and effort and an outlay of dedicated resources over a considerable length of time. This expense is justified when it addresses teacher resilience and commitment to the profession. School librarians who are trained to work in partnership with diverse professionals in their building can advance these trusting relationships to create effective collaborations.

## The Continuum of Care

Borrowed from the field of medicine, a continuum of care is a coordinated system that guides and tracks services delivered over time. Educational professionals can adapt this system to plan for the care of first-year teachers. By applying this continuum of care model to the school setting, the school librarian can direct specific interventions for new teachers over the course of the school year, with the goal of developing resilient faculty who contribute positively to the school ecology.

As part of my doctoral studies, I was fortunate to receive an AASL grant to support a field study to develop and implement the continuum of care model (see figure 1) in my school division. This grant was part of AASL's initiative to support causal research in the field (Mardis, Kimmel, and Pasquini 2018). For this study, fifteen school librarians mentored and collaborated with twenty-six first-year teachers using the continuum of care model to develop resilience and reduce burnout. The resilience, burnout, and retention of these new teachers were compared to new teachers who did not receive this treatment (Soulen 2019).

The continuum of care model was inspired by David Loertscher's Taxonomy (2000) and Patricia Montiel-Overall's Teacher and

Librarian Collaboration model (2008). It "starts small and evolves" (Turner 2014), building over time to develop both the school librarian-new teacher bond and the resilience of the new teacher. The continuum of care model uses a calendar of structured supports that begin with mentoring through which the school librarian connects with the new teacher at the start of the school year to engage and empower him or her. Later in the year, the interventions turn toward collaborative practice to partner and co-teach in a relationship of professional parity.

New teachers in the treatment group received significantly more mentoring and collaboration than new teachers in the comparison group who were in schools that did not have the continuum of care model in place. The treatment group also showed a slight increase in resilience from October to March of the school year. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between resilience over time and age. The influence of age on resilience levels was greatest for the six participants in the treatment group who were 30 to 39 years old.

## What Do the AASL Standards Say?

AASL has traditionally promoted collaborative partnerships and leadership from the peer level (2009). The AASL Standards show that collaboration and leadership are embedded in the school librarian's role of instructional partner. School librarians guide instructional design to integrate critical-thinking, technology, and information skills by working with classroom teachers to establish learning objectives and goals, develop assignments, and implement assessment strategies (AASL 2018).

Best practice for collaboration in school libraries recommends that librarians build personal trust with colleagues before attempting to collaborate (AASL 2018). For new teachers, this may naturally take the form of building a mentoring relationship. The continuum of care model provides a framework on which to build this relationship between the school librarian and new teachers.

### The Calendar of Interventions

School librarians can make a difference in the working lives of new teachers by implementing the calendar of interventions embedded in the continuum of care model (see table 1). Building personal trust through mentoring combined with collaboration produces a new model of professional development for new teachers. This partnership can be steered from a merely transactional relationship toward a truly interop-

erable sharing of roles. School librarians who provide a continuum of care model for new teachers can develop collaborative partnerships between the school librarian and new teachers.

### What to Do

Results of the field study highlight best practices for school librarians when working with new teachers. At the start of the school year, a direct invitation to visit the library is an important first step to establish a partnership. The school librarian must reach out to bridge the gap between the library and the classroom, to draw the new teacher into a supportive space. The proximity of the new teacher's classroom to the library can impact this connection. New teachers who are physically near the school library can more readily access the library's resources. However, this physical distance can be overcome through

electronic communications and the provision of digital resources as was the case of one high school librarian and new teacher. In their building the library was on the first floor, while the new teacher's classroom was on the fourth floor. They were able to form a tight bond through e-mail and digital resources despite the physical distance.

One middle school librarian who had four new sixth-grade teachers organized a collaborative lesson for Black History Month projects. She worked with her school's instructional technology resource teacher to develop a lesson taught in collaboration with the new teachers to create an interdisciplinary digital quilt. Students were thoroughly engaged as they used the district's digital reference resources and the school's iPads to research an African American writer, scientist, mathematician, or historian and then



Figure 1. The continuum of care model for new teachers (Soulen 2019).

Table 1. Sample of interventions.

## Engage

- Send an e-mail to welcome the new teacher to the school and introduce yourself as the school librarian. Follow up with a visit to the new teacher's classroom for a quick assessment to identify needed physical, digital, and human resources for diverse learner needs.
- Ask the new teacher to schedule student library activities or events (i.e., read/checkout books, learn to use library catalog, book talks, storytelling, speed-dating books, or a special event such as book fair, author visit, or an exhibition of student work).
- Offer information about new books, instructional technologies, or AASL award-winning apps or websites (<[www.ala.org/aasl/standards/best](http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards/best)>). Encourage the new teacher to explore the use of digital resources.
- Connect each new teacher with at least three other contacts such as the reading specialist or instructional technology resource teacher, who can help support the new teacher's development.
- Highlight classroom activities through the school's in-house news show, newsletter, or district-wide or local news media.

## Empower

- Encourage the new teacher to bring a colleague to the library to discuss resources available through the library and future school librarian-teacher collaboration.
- Ask the new teacher about relevant topics for classroom instruction.
- Gather instructional resources to deliver to the new teacher's classrooms and place them on reserve in the library.
- Set up a face-to-face social event with the new teacher, such as sharing a coffee or breakfast biscuit or meeting after school for a soda.
- Identify an area of strength of the new teacher and send an e-mail to an administrator celebrating this success.

## Partner

- Collaboratively plan and develop a co-taught lesson or unit either for the classroom or to be taught in the library to meet the needs of the students on objectives being taught in the classroom using library resources to enhance instruction.
- Collaboratively analyze student performance data in preparation for co-taught lesson(s).
- Discuss ways to teach students to locate, utilize, analyze, and produce information.
- Gather resources in preparation for co-taught lesson(s). Offer to adapt materials to suit diverse student learning needs.
- Collaboratively write the lesson plan(s) for co-taught lesson(s) and discuss strategies to enhance the co-teaching experience.

## Co-teach

- Collaboratively implement planned lesson(s).

## After Co-teaching

- Partner to assess student work from the collaborative lesson(s).
- Reflect together about the effectiveness of the collaborative lesson(s) and discuss ways to improve the co-teaching experience for future lessons.
- Celebrate by sharing the mentoring and collaborative experience at a faculty meeting, through the school newsletter, on the school website, or another public venue.



designed a Facebook profile. The individual profile pages were digitally stitched together and displayed in hallways and classrooms. The librarian followed up by celebrating the new teachers' success with the entire school faculty and invited more experienced colleagues to participate in the project as well.

Finding a shared space contributes to building the relationship. One school librarian was able to establish a more personal connection to her new teacher by identifying family and community activities in which they were both involved. Some school librarians who had previously been classroom teachers found that new teachers in their common subject areas, such as English and special education, made a natural fit. A high school librarian who had previously been an English teacher connected immediately with her new teacher in the English department but had to work harder at developing a collaborative relationship with her new teacher in the health and PE department.

In one elementary school, the school librarian had previously been a special education teacher, and her new teacher also taught in this area. The librarian modeled a one-to-one reading lesson using an e-book and iPad with a gumball machine full of marbles for positive reinforce-

ment. The student was intent on the lesson, reading and answering questions while paying attention to his marble rewards. The new teacher was receptive to integrating technology to motivate this student to read, especially when paired with a behavior management system. She came away with a new confidence and new strategies for providing resources for her learners. School librarians can adapt the continuum of care to meet the needs of their own new faculty and establish a collaborative pairing with their new teachers, which may continue for years to come.

### What NOT to Do

School librarians who are working with new teachers should avoid certain behaviors that could threaten the relationship. For example, providing a long list of resources can be overwhelming for new teachers. Instead, it is best to provide one or two carefully curated resources to better meet the specific needs of the new teacher. It is also important to avoid the perception of the school librarian appearing in an administrative or evaluative role, which may alarm the new teacher. Rather, it is important to move the pairing from the weighted mentor/mentee relationship toward a truly collaborative balance of professional parity.

### Conclusion

As a practicing school librarian, I developed the continuum of care model to share ideas and build relationships in a community of practice (Wenger 1998). I saw my collegial role as school librarian as different from that of other teachers and specialists in my building. Given the opportunity to implement the continuum of care model across my school division, I sought to build opportunities to reach out to new teachers, bridging the gap between the library and the classroom and drawing new teachers into a supportive space. The school librarian who is well versed in listening to patron needs, assessing, and providing resources to support learning can use these same skills to support new teachers.

The American Library Association's Center for the Future of Libraries confirms the long-term commitment of the profession to the resilience of society, declaring that "librarians are not just educators but activists" (Aldrich 2018). Indeed, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich identifies three skills as critical to resilience, namely empower, engage, and energize. She recommends "a systematic approach that is coordinated across a community, with libraries as part of the strategy" (2018, 42). The continuum of care model addresses this societal need with a proactive



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systematic approach to new teacher resilience to initiate the conversation and energize the relationship.

School librarians who provide mentoring for new teachers create an opportunity to develop a relationship of professional parity and bridge the gap between the library and the classroom. The continuum of care model provides specific interventions to build resilience of new teachers, reduce burnout, and increase the commitment and effectiveness of new teachers. School librarians should engage and empower new teachers to initiate the conversation, then partner and co-teach to energize the relationship. By establishing an alliance with new teachers, school librarians can develop a collaborative pairing for years to come.

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