Excerpt from Key Instructional Word: Learning Resources
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Rethinking Resource Budgets

Budgets for school library collections are usually constructed on one
of the following: format, services, circulation, or curriculum.
Traditionally budgets have been categorized by information format:
books, periodicals, nonprint, computer software, computer hardware.
Such account divisions lead to dollars wasted to purchase resources
by format, say for video programs, when the real need might be in
periodicals but dollars cannot be shifted.

A materials budget based on services has account divisions that
support curriculum resources, recreational reading, general
reference, management costs and special projects. This places several
important output measures at competition with each other for future
dollars.

Some advocate shifts in school media collection budgets should be
based on evidence of use. Therefore circulation data is gathered to
determine shifts in distribution of dollars with those areas showing
more use or demand receiving a growing portion of the budget. For
a resource center that expects to demonstrate its value by supporting
the curriculum, "popularity" may not be the most important factor to
measure. Rather resource need as determined by review of the
collection compared to instructional plans by the educators involved
may be more reasonable. Measures for popular or recreational
reading may depend on circulation numbers, but dramatic shifts in
dollars should be justified by planned instructional units very likely
to repeat in the future and which are tied to learning standards.

Other budget distributions may be based on curriculum or grade
levels. Under this budgeting process areas of the curriculum are
defined in terms of expected resource need and dollars are budgeted
for history, language arts, science and so forth. Enrollment levels for
different grades may also influence where dollars are placed.
Number of students does not equal the potential for a unit. Certainly
the number of students who may become involved in projects related
is a factor to consider, but high enrollment numbers in history classes

should not automatically out weigh low numbers in science classes when more projects, and therefore more resource need, may come from the science teachers.

In general, outside of the growth in the investments in technology, school library media funding remains stagnant compared to funding increases for other areas of education. The per pupil investment has nearly doubled in most states over the past 25 years because of the increased expenses for transportation, facilities, and salaries. Some library media specialists wonder if there are enough dollars available to them to even give the time to considering how or why to construct a budget.

A learning resources budget process is based on two important principles. One, the needs of the learner are identified and drive the content description for the budget. Second, dollar resources are shared or combined from as many sources as possible so that these learning needs can be met. These principles, in turn, not only drive the account descriptions, but also are the basis for conversations leading to lesson plans and responsibilities for resource identification.

Figure 2. Sample Budget Plan for Learning Resources and Inquiry Theme
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Target Learning Resource Area: Diversity
Inquiry Project Title: Valuing Diversity in Our Community
Grade Level: Eighth   Number of Students: 60
Collaborating Teachers: Social Studies – Mr. Williams and Ms. Feller
Teacher of Library Media, Inquiry and Information Literacy: Ms. Kelly
All three collaborating as experienced instructional media specialists
Duration of Project: 4 weeks, spring term
Learning Objectives: Students will investigate and report on the
        diversity of ethnic, religious, social and political groups
        within their local community compared and contrasted to
        their country.

Knowledge Content Standards: Upon completion of this inquiry unit the student will:
- know a variety of forms of diversity in America and his/her local community
- describe how diversity encourages cultural creativity and elaborate on specific examples found locally
- list major conflicts in American society and the local community that have arisen from diversity issues
- understand constructive ways in which conflicts can be resolved in a peaceful manner that respects individual rights and promotes the common good; provide examples from local history if possible
- understand how an American Identity stems from belief in and allegiance to shared political values and principles and contrast this to other countries in which identity is based on narrow allegiance to a specific ethnicity, religion, national origin, and/or political structure.

Information Literacy Standards: The student will practice skills in information inquiry to become more proficient in the following:
- compare and contrast sources to determine which are most accurate, relevant, and comprehensive
- identify bias in a variety of resources
- summarize and communicate findings in a meaningful way for peers

Resources Budgeted	Funding Source	Dollar Amount
Update print materials	Library	$ 3000

- expand biographies on diverse political, religious and social leaders; add multiple copies of those the most prominent personalities; expand by two titles per student or 120 new titles at a variety of reading levels grades 4-10. Invest in paperback editions when possible. Some popular names should be viewed as likely consumable items to be replaced or updated within three years.
- expand documents describing conflicts based on diversity, including conflicts in the last thirty years around the world as well as in the United States; expand by one title per student or 60 new titles at a variety of reading levels grades 4-10.
- collect newspaper articles, booklets, and other resources that depict local diversity issues over the past three

decades; duplicate those items which seem most useful, not available for purchase, are copyright free, and which are most likely to deteriorate with student handling
- collect selected documents which serve as concrete examples of extreme bias to compare to resources containing a more balanced and tolerant content; a half dozen items
- collect examples of documents which serve to illustrate misleading and inaccurate interpretation of facts to compare to those which provide a more reasonable interpretation; a half dozen items

Update nonprint materials   Library
$ 500
- add recordings or video programs which serve to illustrate diversity, conflicts resulting from diversity, and resolution of conflicts; seek one title for every three students or about two dozen new titles

Computer software   Department
$ 350
- a simulation game designed to place students in decision-making roles to meet issues and conflicts which result from different opinions and beliefs; to be added to the library media center's collection

Supplies and   Principal $ 200
Duplication
- additional dollars are promised by the administration to support use of more paper and duplication of resources than is normally expected in a typical project

Guest speakers   PTA $ 300
- sponsored by the parent/teacher association, transportation costs will be covered to bring in up to ten local resource people for presentations and individual interviews on diversity in the community and conflict resolution

Field trip   PTA $ 900
- expenses for transportation, substitute teachers (including the instructional library media specialist), funded by the parent/teacher association for a one day trip to the Museum of Civil Rights located 70 miles from the school

Inter-library loan   Library $100

- gather titles from public library and other schools which are needed for the four week duration; some postage may be needed or other loan costs involved

Writing journals   Department $ 210
- blank notebooks to serve as research journals, interview records, for note gathering, and to document student reflections on the research process; student keep the notebooks following the completion of the project

Poster resources   Library $ 280
- free-standing, two-fold blank posters which will provide the normal means for students to display their findings; depending on abilities, students will have other presentation options

Resources Owned	Location	ApproximateValue
Digital cameras	Library	$ 700

- document interviews and field trip

| Video recorders | Library | $ 700 |

- record interviews of local personalities

| Online resources | Library | $ N/A |
| | & Classroom | |

- documents through the Internet; compose webquest for the most relevant examples to get students started

| Print resources | Library | $ 1200 |

- identify the titles owned which will serve as a core to help students do their exploratory reading as a basis for further in-depth research

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Best Practices of Those Who Manage Learning Resource Collections

Those who budget time and dollars to support curriculum through building relevant instructional learning resource collections tend to:

- analyze local student and teacher needs through observations, conversations, and keeping current with learning behavior research;
- develop a collection policy and public relations which profile those areas of the collection which will help to improve and advance selected portions of the curriculum;
- broaden their review of and sharing of selection aids beyond just those directed toward school librarians; they read reviews from teacher magazines and call for personal preview of materials when necessary;
- weed out old, misleading materials and resources;
- retain a few selected misleading items and access other examples so that teachers and students can be shown the comparison to accurate information sources;
- seek ways to expand the budget by sharing plans with others and requesting a "buy-in" so that the project will become reality; they have a nose for grant funding;
- realize that full curriculum support is expensive, risky and takes time and there they have patience and seek commitment to the process from collaborative teachers who they know will carry through with instruction based on their time and dollar investments;
- think in terms of resources as more than print or nonprint information items, but realize there is a great deal of information to be gained through expert human resources;
- collect unique realia that will help to give fun and excitement to projects – including art pieces, displays, models, and games;
- share collection items and collection access across classrooms (including multiple copies and classroom sets), subject areas, and libraries; and share in the success of information-rich instructional units.

For Further Reading

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