

Web Seal of Excellence: Linda Picceri

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<http://www.watertown.k12.ma.us/wms/library/splash.html>

Wearing and Sharing Multiple Hats

As I am writing this article I am thinking about the theme of our 2006 conference, "The Many Hats We Wear." It seems that each year the number of hats I wear increases exponentially. In fact, I am running out of room in my closet for all of them. I would like to focus on how learning to share the hats in my closet has helped me and my program.

It all began last summer when our new superintendent took over. She announced that our school library teachers and instructional technology teachers would no longer be separated into two distinct groups. We now would be called educational technology teachers who would be sharing library and technology integration duties. Our department, formerly the Department of Libraries and Instructional Technology, would be called the Educational Technology Department. Initially I had a "here we go again" reaction as did many of my school library and IT colleagues, but after the dust settled and I had a chance to think about it, I thought that maybe this could work. After all, there is a lot of overlap between school library teachers and IT teachers, and as more technology comes into play the overlap increases.

Later that summer I was informed that a job had been created for an additional educational technology teacher at my school. This person would work out of the library with me. This made me a little nervous. After all I wasn't used to sharing my space or duties with anyone. I had been the go to person for all things library and technology almost 20 years. In spite of my nerves I decided to remain open minded. The new hire turned out to be Lindsay Hull, a very bright and enthusiastic IT teacher who was in the final stages of completing her Masters Degree at Harvard. Coincidentally I had supervised her internship the year before and had found her to be very receptive, creative, and easy to work with. The more I thought about job sharing with Lindsay the more excited I became about the upcoming year.



As it has turned out, the match was everything I had hoped it would be. Our individual skills and areas of expertise, though different, dovetailed perfectly. After I got over my initial fear of letting her near the automated catalog, I realized that she was as capable of learning the basics of school librarianship as I was of wikis, blogs, podcasting, movie making, and basic web design. Of course I realize there are aspects of both our jobs that remain sacred. I am still in charge of developing, organizing, and maintaining the collection and she is the main go to person for teachers looking to integrate 2.0 technologies into the teaching and learning process. Even though we share many of these responsibilities, we have managed to maintain our individual professional identities.

In our first year working together, we have made a concerted effort to create a learning commons environment at Watertown Middle School. We have opened the space, created areas for presentation and multimedia production. We even began a very successful listening lunch for grade 8 which we are hoping to expand to at least grade 7 next year. More importantly we are trying to foster an atmosphere of openness, collaboration, and creativity in the learning commons. I think we are on the right path. When you walk into our learning commons you can sense the positive energy.

As more and more school districts consider adopting the model of combining school library teachers and IT teachers, I wonder if this is the way of the future. Will we eventually morph into something new, something hybrid? Will a new certification ever be considered which incorporates both fields? It seems to me we are on two roads that are merging. I have been doing a lot of thinking, questioning and soul searching ever since I heard Chris Harris speak at our MSLA conference a few years back. It was like being awakened from a deep sleep. David Loertscher and Ross Todd have had an impact on my line of thinking as well. I wonder what our school libraries are going to look like, not five years from now, but ten years from now. What new skills will we need to learn and bring to the table in order to help students not only access information but transform information into new knowledge? What I am certain of is we can't dig our heels in and resist change. We need to expect and embrace change as it comes our way. I truly believe that this is how we will stay relevant.

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