Building Consensus for School Librarian Collaboration: A Delphi Study

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Abstract

This Delphi study engaged 38 national experts in school librarianship to develop a consensus-based model of school librarian collaboration (SLC) that reflects current practice. Through three iterative rounds the panel achieved strong consensus on a definition of SLC, a framework representing a continuum of collaborative practice, and necessary conditions for success. The resulting definition of SLC is "an educator-to-educator partnership to enhance student learning through complementary expertise that develops over time and is built on mutual trust, shared goals, and open communication." The seven levels continuum of SLC are: Autonomy, Curation, Contribution, Coordination, Integration, Partnership, and Assurance. These levels allow practitioners to identify current collaborative practice and plan for growth. This work extends prior theoretical models by incorporating critical environmental, cultural, and dispositional factors that impact collaborative efforts and by creating tools to operationalize the consensus model for practitioners.

Keywords: *school librarian collaboration, Delphi method, collaborative framework, school library standards, instructional collaboration, school library impact, educator partnerships, collaborative continuum*

Introduction

Collaboration is the bridge to an effective school library program. It spans the divide between classrooms and the school library, creating a path where knowledge, resources, and expertise travel in both directions. When school librarians and educators connect and align their practice, instruction becomes more coherent, student inquiry opportunities expand, and students gain the support they need to engage deeper in their learning. Contemporary studies of school librarian collaboration (SLC) point to benefits for pre-service educators, practitioners, and, by extension, their students (Giles et al., 2024; Merga et al., 2021). They also document the many different ways collaboration is defined and enacted across contexts.

Since the concept of SLC was first introduced in *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (AASL/AECT, 1988), it has evolved into one of six essential shared foundations in the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* (AASL, 2018). The initial emphasis that "an effective school library media program depends on the collaborative efforts of all those who are responsible for student learning" (AASL/AECT, 1988, p. 21) provided a bedrock foundational concept, and focus on this essential partnership with other educators has been given more weight and substance with each subsequent iteration. In addition to the recognition as a shared foundation, collaboration resonates throughout today's standards as a critical component of effective practice. Despite this evolution, school librarians continue to face challenges in defining, implementing, and scaffolding effective collaboration practices that maximize their impact on student learning.

Todd noted "available data show that the concept of collaboration is more espoused than practised by school librarians" (2005, p. 3). Even with the clarity in the 2018 standards, studies continued to describe levels of collaboration at the lower end of collaborative frameworks.

Research shows that implementation of SLC is often uneven due to workload and resource pressures, the lack of a clear understanding of roles, differences in administrator support, and collaboration as a school-wide focus, all of which may limit the school librarian's ability to influence learning across the school (Bennett, 2025; Merga & Roni, 2025). If school librarians could contextualize and then operationalize these factors in their current practice and see specific exemplars of SLC, perhaps they could incorporate additional SLC opportunities.

Montiel-Overall's (2005) work developed a comprehensive model for SLC based on Loertscher's (1988; 2000) foundational taxonomy of school librarians. However, practice, schools, and technology have evolved in significant ways, including the rise in digital learning, changes in staffing and scheduling, and increasing accountability for all educators. These shifts call for a new, refreshed, and research-informed model of SLC that reflects today's professional realities.

Delphi

The Delphi technique is well-matched to the problem posed. It is an iterative method for eliciting and refining expert opinion to produce consensus on a topic where clarity is difficult to capture. The multiple rounds of focused feedback allow experts to refine their ideas and reach consensus (Jones, 2018). In order to develop an updated model of SLC, one that acknowledges current environmental variables while remaining practical, the Delphi technique provided a method for collecting and organizing expertise into a clear, actionable model. It was particularly suited to our examination of a critical concern in the field of school librarianship. It acknowledged that, owing to the specialized nature of the profession and the subsequent limited number of members who are familiar with the development and implementation of standards related to collaboration, a narrower focus was required. It provided the opportunity to engage a

highly selective group of experts in the field to objectively develop group consensus through structured communication and feedback without being dismissive of the interests of all school librarians. The combination of highly qualified panelists, guaranteed anonymity, the iterative nature of data collection, and subsequent feedback generated a collective agreement that might otherwise have been inconsistent and lacking a clear structure.

Purpose

This study aimed to engage identified experts in school librarianship to develop consensus on an updated, scaffolded, and practical model of SLC. This model was built on previous scholarly efforts and also by identifying contemporary collaboration levels and considering dispositional elements and environmental variables critical to its success.

Research Questions

This led to our research questions, which were:

- What does an updated model of SLC look like?
- How can an updated model of SLC be structured to reflect current practices, address environmental variables, consider dispositional elements, and provide practical guidance for practitioners in developing more effective partnerships with other educators?

Literature Review

Foundations of Collaboration

Loertscher developed a taxonomy for school libraries (1988) that school librarians used to determine and measure their role, power, and influence on academic achievement in the school. The taxonomy had 11 levels. In 2000, Loertscher updated his work to recognize the impact of various technologies. The taxonomy covered collaboration from Level 1, no

involvement, and the library is bypassed to Level 11, participation and contribution made along with teachers to planning and developing the structure of what will be taught.

Practitioners in the field created various tools based on Loertcher's work. The Londonderry (NH) School District developed a Level of Collaboration Rubric (LOC Rubric) that helped assess where school librarians were in terms of their work with teachers. The LOC was shared widely (Harland, 2011) and was included in Loertcher's 2000 revision. It provided a means of analysis that helped school librarians know where to focus efforts to attain higher levels of collaboration.

In 2005, Montiel-Overall adapted Loertscher's Taxonomy by joining his 11 levels into four models and creating a SLC theory. Model A: Coordination increasing to Model B: Cooperation/Partnership (lower on the continuum), then Model C represented by Integrated Instruction to the high-end Model D of Integrated Curriculum. While this theory offered a comprehensive and nuanced framework, its complexity was challenging for practicing librarians to use in daily practice.

Over a significant period, a series of school library impact studies identified collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians as a critical component associated with student achievement. Collectively, the studies found positive correlations between the presence of a full-time certified school librarian and student test scores (Burress et al., 2023; Gordon & Cicchetti, 2018; Haycock, 2011; Lance et al., 2005, 2007, 2010; Lance & Hofschire, 2011, 2012, 2012a; Lance & Kachel, 2018; Lance & Schwarz, 2012; Loertscher & Koechlin, 2014; Porter, 2024; Wine et al., 2023). They additionally indicated positive associations between SLC and an increase in student academic scores (Gordon & Cicchetti, 2018; Koechlin, 2014; Lance et al., 2010; Lance & Hofschire, 2011, 2012, 2012a; Lance & Kachel, 2018; Lance & Schwarz, 2012;

Pasquini & Schultz-Jones, 2019). The question remains: What does SLC look like in practice today?

The National School Library Standards (AASL, 2025) provided a framework for the essential role of the school librarian as a collaborator in the school community through its emphasis on the key commitment to "work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work towards common goals" (p. 86). School librarians are expected to work with other educators and focus on the alignment of resources, services, and standards with curriculum, the school's mission, and strategic plans to ensure the establishment of a collaborative culture. This level of collaboration includes the development of policies and procedures that foster collaboration and reflect learning community needs and participation by school librarians in curriculum development and assessment. Additionally, the standards recognize that the school librarian facilitates connections and opportunities for collaborating among various members of the learning community through the provision of professional development, communication about service and resource availability, and involvement in committees and projects.

AASL also provided practitioners with Coleman's (2019) *Collaborate* book and the Emerging Leader's Activity Guide addressing collaboration (AASL, 2024), both of which serve as practical guides for school librarians, providing strategies and examples to effectively implement the "Collaborate" shared foundation. While this work is invaluable for practitioners in offering specific strategies for how to collaborate, they are application guides and do not propose an updated model that addresses the multifaceted nature of collaboration.

Conditions that Enable Collaboration

Beyond structural frameworks, research highlights variables, such as environmental, cultural, and dispositional factors that lead to successful collaboration (Mattessich & Johnson,

2018). These include shared goals, trust, communication, scheduling, and leadership support. Dispositions are ways of thinking and interacting with people that influence working relationships and were looked at in the context of Dewey's definition that involves a "predisposition, readiness to act overtly in a specific fashion whenever opportunity is presented" (1922, p. 41) and that of Arnstine who identified the acquisition of "behaviors, knowledge, skills, habits, and attitudes," as dispositions (1967, p. 13). A Delphi study on the professional dispositions of school librarians related to successful practice was conducted by Bush and Jones (2010). Of the 11 dispositions identified as important, collaboration ranked second and descriptors of the disposition included such terms as "team-builder, central part of job, listens, crosses boundaries, build partnerships, for greater good, open dialogue, transformation of isolated learning, sharing, positive professional and societal change, effective action" (Bush & Jones, 2010, p. 8). In their study, Copeland and Jacobs (2017) similarly explained, "We had to establish and maintain a level of deep trust and respect for each other, rely on each other's area of expertise, understand that it is fine to make mistakes, and accept each other's ideas" (p. 25). This research demonstrates how a focus on professional dispositions is essential for collaborative success, yet it is only one of the elements that contribute to effective partnerships.

Leadership and school culture additionally emerged as critical factors in effective collaborations. Farmer (2025) positioned school principals as the key to successful SLCs and emphasized that school librarians must align their efforts with the principal's vision to impact student learning. Farmer outlined environmental and cultural conditions necessary for effective collaborations, including shared governance, common planning time, and a culture of collaboration. Additionally, Ballard and Fontichiaro (2019) argued that understanding dynamics of power, authority, and school culture allows school librarians to move from innovation

instigators to trusted champions of growth through collaboration. Similarly, Branch-Mueller and Rodger (2022) found that school librarian leaders enact collaboration through dispositional leadership rather than positional authority. Their participants demonstrated movement along a "dispositional continuum" from expertise to influence, cooperation to coaching, and facilitation to flexibility. These are shifts that rely on trust, openness, and advocacy. These findings reinforce that collaboration arises from both the school culture and the librarian's dispositions and not simply environmental supports such as common planning time. Sturge (2019) further illustrated these dynamics by describing a district-level effort to shift elementary library practices from an isolated, pull-in model to a collaborative approach. She framed flexibility in scheduling as a tool to support educator and librarian co-planning and co-teaching. Sturge identified key readiness factors: classroom educators' awareness of librarian roles, common planning periods, and administrator buy-in as critical barriers or enablers. Together, these studies underscored that collaboration is not simply a librarian-initiated process, but involves environmental, relational, and administrative dimensions.

Research has also examined collaboration in practice. Kammer et al. (2021) explored the nature of successful collaborations to understand what strategies made them successful. These included initiating the collaboration, securing support from the principal, identifying a shared vision, and holding regular meetings. Colvin and Croft (2024) examined the relational ideas that lead to successful collaboration, including "creating a culture of collaboration, making collaboration relevant to the curriculum, starting small, and advocating for collaboration" (p. 13). Mentoring new teachers has also been identified as a key enabler for developing collaborative partnerships (Soulen, 2021). Ultimately, these findings emphasize the varied nature of effective collaboration and lay the groundwork for a practical and accessible framework for practitioners.

Most recently, research highlighted how current practices shape school librarians' ability to collaborate effectively. Bennett (2025) demonstrated how shared structures like planning and reflection can help overcome barriers. Merga and Roni (2025) described workforce challenges facing school librarians and other educators, noting issues such as staffing shortages, workload intensification, and vague definitions of roles. Together, these studies reinforce the idea that collaboration is more than individual dispositions and administrative support; it is also about broader professional conditions impacting today's educational landscape.

Synthesis

This body of research shows that while frameworks are valuable to scholars and the impact of SLC has been communicated thoroughly, the concept of levels of collaboration has not been translated into a practical, accessible framework for today's practitioners. School librarian professionals are increasingly busy, navigating complex instructional roles, technology integration, and evolving educational and societal demands, making it more important to develop frameworks and tools that are research-informed, flexible, and pragmatic. Collaboration models remain theoretical rather than practical without a clear, actionable framework that reflects contemporary challenges and opportunities. This study aimed to bridge that gap by developing a scaffolded model of collaboration that acknowledges dispositions, environmental factors, and administrative support while remaining adaptable for today's real-world application.

Methodology

To develop an updated model of SLC we used the Delphi method, a structured process designed to build consensus among experts through iterative rounds of questioning and feedback. The Delphi method is particularly well-suited for exploring complex or evolving issues where

definitive evidence may be limited but practitioner expertise is rich (Jones, 2018; Khodyakov et al., 2023).

The original use of the Delphi Method was by RAND researchers working with the United States Air Force in a research and development project to avoid confrontation that can occur when alternative methods to create consensus were used (Dalkey & Helmer, 1962). They wrote that confrontation, "all too often induces the hasty formulation of preconceived notions, an inclination to close one's mind to novel ideas, a tendency to defend a stand once taken or … a predisposition to be swayed by persuasively stated opinions of others" (p. 2). This is avoided with the anonymity offered by the Delphi method.

In this study, by engaging a diverse panel of highly qualified school librarians, educators, and researchers, the Delphi method allowed us to gather perspectives, refine ideas, and work toward shared agreement on definitions, levels of collaboration, and necessary conditions for successful collaborations. The anonymity of responses, combined with structured feedback across multiple rounds, minimized bias and encouraged thoughtful contributions, ultimately allowing the research team to identify shared understandings of a comprehensive model.

Research Design and Timeline

The study design included three rounds of data collection using anonymous mixed-method surveys. "Most Delphi research is conducted in three rounds as the technique becomes increasingly ineffective after three rounds" (Jones, 2018, p. 234).

- **3/22/25 - Recruitment email:** with reply requested by 3/31/25
- **4/2/25 - Round 1**: Open-ended questions to gather expert perspectives with reply requested by 4/18/25

- **5/6/25 - Round 2**: Rating and commenting on themes and elements generated from Round 1, with reply requested by 5/23/25
- **6/5/25 - Round 3**: Confirming consensus and finalizing the language from Round 2 with reply requested by 6/25/25

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to ensure panelists possessed the expertise necessary to contribute meaningfully to the development of a collaboration model (Creswell, 2014; Jones, 2018; Patton, 2015). Experts were identified based on leadership roles and active engagement in national-level organizations shaping school librarianship and standards. Given the study's purpose of creating a research-informed yet practice-focused model, it was critical to engage individuals with extensive experience and leadership in school librarianship, as well as knowledge of national standards. Selection criteria included service in positions and involvement at the national level, specifically:

- Past Presidents of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL),
- Current Board members of the AASL,
- Members of the 2018 AASL Standards Editorial Board and Implementation Committee,
- Recent Chairs of the AASL Supervisors Section,
- Members of the AASL-CAEP Coordinating Committee,
- Faculty in ALA-accredited/AASL-approved school librarianship programs,
- Recent Chairs of the AASL Affiliate/Chapter Assembly.

Initial invitations were sent to 83 individuals who were included on one of these lists and discoverable as a current member of AASL in February 2025. We outlined the study's purpose, the Delphi process, and expectations for participation (see Appendix A for the recruitment

email). 38 experts agreed to participate and provided informed consent. By selecting individuals who shaped policies, standards, and instructional practices at the national level, the study ensured that findings were grounded in both scholarly expertise and real-world application. See Appendix B for the list of participants who agreed to have their names included.

Data Collection

Data were collected using anonymous Google Forms. One member of our research team designed the questionnaires, and the other two pretested the tools. These instruments were designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative data across three rounds:

- **Round 1**: Participants responded to five open-ended questions on defining collaboration, levels of collaboration, effective strategies, and necessary conditions for successful collaboration.
- **Round 2**: Participants rated the clarity, accuracy, and relevance of Round 1 themes using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) and provided open-text feedback.
- **Round 3**: Participants reviewed a revised definition and refined continuum, re-rated items, and offered final narrative comments.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using inductive content analysis, thematic coding, and descriptive statistics. This mixed methods approach combined the exploratory nature of inductive analysis with the more structured validation of examining statistics. Given the iterative nature of the Delphi method, analysis was conducted in phases, with each round informing subsequent rounds.

- **Round 1**: Responses were analyzed using inductive content analysis to allow themes to emerge directly from the data. Two researchers independently coded responses, the third researcher compared initial codes, and together we established a master codebook.
- **Round 2**: Consensus was measured using descriptive statistics to summarize the level of agreement among participants. During this round, items with ≥70% agreement were considered strong consensus; those below 70% were revised or discarded. Qualitative data were analyzed using inductive coding.
- **Round 3**: Final confirmation of consensus involved using descriptive statistics. Items with ≥80% agreement were considered strong consensus. Narrative feedback was qualitatively coded to contextualize the continuum for practice and create a rubric.

By structuring our analysis around these techniques, we ensured rigor, transparency, and participant-driven insights (Jones, 2018; Khodyakov et al., 2023) as they are core principles of the Delphi methodology.

Findings

The purpose of this Delphi study was to build a consensus of experts in the field of school librarianship around a contemporary definition of SLC, a framework that reflects current practice, and tools that support practitioner use. Over three iterative rounds, the panel reached strong consensus on a definition of SLC, a seven-level framework representing a continuum of practice, strategies and conditions necessary for success, and practitioner rubrics designed to expand the model into practice.

38 experts consented to participate. Retention rates across rounds exceeded ≥70%, demonstrating sustained engagement throughout the process (Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Engagement Across Rounds

Delphi Round	Number	% of Initial Participants
Invited to Participate	83	100
Agreed to Participate	38	46
Completed Round 1	30	79
Completed Round 2	27	71
Completed Round 3	29	76

Participant responses from Round 1 open-ended questions (Table 2) were collected using Google Forms and organized in a spreadsheet.

Table 2. Round 1 Questions

Q1. Defining Collaboration in School Librarianship What are the essential components of effective collaboration between school librarians and other educators? Please list up to five components and provide a brief justification for each.
Q2. Levels of Collaboration Based on your experience, how would you describe different levels or stages of collaboration between school librarians and educators? What distinguishes these levels?
Q3. Contemporary Strategies What strategies or practices have you found most effective in fostering strong collaboration between school librarians and educators?
Q4. Impact of Collaboration on Student Learning & Instruction In what ways does collaboration between school librarians and educators impact student learning and instructional practices? Can you share specific examples?
Q5. Necessary Conditions for Successful Collaboration What environmental, institutional, dispositional, or cultural factors are necessary to foster and sustain effective collaboration between school librarians and educators?

Consensus Definition of School Librarian Collaboration

The panel began by responding to Q1, describing essential components of collaboration. Responses were analyzed using inductive coding, where themes emerged directly from the data

(Creswell, 2014). The researchers independently reviewed a subset of responses and developed an initial coding framework using open coding. After comparing and refining these codes, a codebook was established to ensure consistency.

Once the codebook was established, participant responses were systematically coded into thematic categories as displayed in Table 3. To ensure consistency in coding, the researchers independently coded a subset of responses and then met to compare, discuss, and refine our interpretations, an approach recommended by Saldaña (2016) to improve intercoder agreement and reliability.

Table 3. Round 1 Q1 Responses– Defining School Librarian Collaboration (N=30)

Code	**Consensus %**	**Definition**
Trust	70	Mutual respect, Relationship building, Accountability/Reliability
Communication	70	Open two-way dialogue, Active listening
Shared Vision/Goals	45	Common vision/values/goals
Administrative Support	37	Time to Plan/Collaborate, Flexible/Responsive Schedule, Librarian agency, Expectations of collaboration
Expertise	33	Understanding pedagogy, Content knowledge, Understanding of roles
Dispositions	33	Flexibility, Openness, Proactive, Positivity, Passion, Enthusiasm, Reflection

Table 3 shows that the highest level of consensus in Round 1 was reached on trust and communication as key elements of SLC. Shared vision and goals also showed a notable level of agreement among participants. All of the qualitative data from the first questions in Round 1 was

analyzed and synthesized into five newly crafted definitions, which served as the foundation for the subsequent rounds.

The purpose of Round 2 was to validate the emergent definition of SLC generated from Round 1's open-ended responses. Participants were given a structured survey and asked to review and rank the five definitions (Table 4). Items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale, with open-text fields available for clarification or suggested revisions, to move closer toward a shared understanding. This step was crucial for narrowing down the options and reaching a collective consensus on the most accurate and comprehensive definition of SLC.

Table 4. Round 2. Five Definitions of SLC (N=27)

Definition	**% Agreement**
Definition 1. School Librarian Collaboration is a trusting partnership focused on achieving shared instructional goals and vision through open two-way communication.	66
Definition 2. School Librarian Collaboration is a trusting partnership with shared instructional vision and goals, open two-way communication, and a commitment to flexibility, professional expertise, and reflective practice.	48
Definition 3. School Librarian Collaboration is a flexible partnership built on mutual trust, shared vision and goals, expertise, and open communication, working together to enhance student learning.	74
Definition 4. School Librarian Collaboration is a trusting-expert-driven partnership focused on shared instructional vision and goals, strengthened through open two-way communication, flexibility, and proactive engagement.	33
Definition 5. School Librarian Collaboration is ongoing teamwork between librarians and educators, supported by administration, to improve instruction and student outcomes.	41

As shown in Table 4, only Definition 3 met the predefined threshold of ≥70% agreement. We then analyzed the qualitative feedback, made minor revisions to the definition, and presented it back to the panel during Round 3 for validation. We asked the panel to rate the revised definition

on their level of agreement, the clarity of the definition, and the usefulness of the definition in practice. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5. Round 3. Definition of SLC Agreement, Clarity, and Usefulness (N=29)

Definition. School Librarian and Educator Collaboration is a partnership to enhance student learning through combined expertise. It is built on mutual trust, shared goals, and open communication.	%
Agreement (Strongly Agree/Agree)	97
Clarity (Extremely Clear/Clear)	100
Usefulness (Extremely Useful/Useful)	100

Table 5 shows the consensus reached on the Round 3 definition of SLC, with strong agreement, clarity, and usefulness scores, indicating nearly unanimous support for the revised definition. Panelists highlighted the need to affirm school librarians as equal educational partners. One noted, “For the general public, this infers that school librarians aren't educators,” while another confirmed, “For my own practice or professional discussions, this makes sense because we know that school librarians are educators.” We revised the wording to address these concerns.

Panelists also valued a concise definition capturing partnership, student learning, expertise, trust, shared goals, and communication. As one expert summarized, *“*This definition is not too wordy. Simple, yet expresses the definition well,” while another commented, “You’ve captured all the key points--partnership, student learning, combined expertise, trust, goals, and communication.” Table 6 includes the rationale for changes to the final definition.

Table 6. Final Definition

Round 3 Definition	**Final Definition**	**Rationale for Change**
School Librarian and Educator Collaboration is a	School librarian collaboration is an educator-to-educator	**Clarifying roles:** “this infers that school

partnership to enhance student learning through combined expertise. It is built on mutual trust, shared goals, and open communication.	partnership to enhance student learning through complementary expertise. It develops over time and is built on mutual trust, shared goals, and open communication.	librarians aren't educators" and "Complementary might be stronger than combined" **Gradual nature:** "It takes time to build mutual trust and open collaboration" **Affirmation of clarity:** "You've distilled Montiel-Overall's lengthy definition down to its critical components"

The consensus definition of s*chool librarian collaboration* is an educator-to-educator partnership to enhance student learning through complementary expertise. It develops over time and is built on mutual trust, shared goals, and open communication. This definition asserts that school librarians are educators and the collaborative process is with other educators, whether administrators, teachers, or specialists. SLC is also shaped by local context, including administrator support, student needs, and the librarians' dispositions.

Continuum of School Librarian Collaboration

In Round 1, participants described a range of collaborative practices (see Q2 in Table 2). Using inductive content analysis, we analyzed their qualitative responses from which seven distinct levels of collaboration emerged. These initial levels: Self-Directed/Independent, Curation, Cooperation, Coordination, Integration, Integrated Partnership, and Systemic/Embedded represent a continuum from limited interaction to fully integrated partnerships embedded in school culture. Table 7 summarizes the initial codes and the percentage of consensus.

Table 7. Round 1 Q2 Responses– Levels of School Librarian Collaboration (N=30)

Level	Consensus %	Description	Sample Quotes
1. Self-Directed	26	Librarian or educator independently shares, selects, or schedules resources with little to no collaboration or communication.	"Collaboration can start with sharing resources in an email or newsletter (no interaction)."
2. Curation	70	Librarian provides materials or resources based on communication with educators, with minimal interaction or joint planning.	"Teachers let librarian know about needs and librarian supplies either expertise, or materials, or equipment."
3. Cooperation	48	Librarian supports an educator's instruction through lesson ideas, resource sharing, or direct instruction, but planning is minimal.	"Conducting brief library orientations to equip students with essential research skills for ongoing use."
4. Coordination	59	Librarian and educator jointly design instruction or a unit, but typically teach and assess separately.	"Collaborators plan together but execute instruction and assessment separately."
5. Integration	41	Librarian and educator share instructional responsibilities, including planning and teaching. May include co-assessment.	"Working directly with the teacher to design a lesson where both the teacher and the school librarian take on parts of the instruction."
6. Integrated Partnership	59	Full partnership involving shared planning, co-teaching, and co-assessment. Often embedded	"Co-planning, co-teaching, co-evaluation. Student

		in curriculum with long-term collaboration and trust.	learning progress eval is shared.”
7. Systemic	19	Collaboration with the librarian is a school-wide norm; every teacher partners on an integrated unit with the librarian.	“Librarian works with grade-level or subject-area teachers on curriculum development, expectations set (often with or by administrators) over school year and beyond”

These seven categories informed the development of a SLC continuum, which was presented to the participants for review and consensus-building in subsequent rounds.

In Round 2, participants were presented with the thematic categories describing levels of collaboration generated from Round 1. Using a structured survey, participants were asked to review, rate, and comment on the level titles (Table 8) and definitions (Table 9). Items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale, with open-text fields available for clarification or suggested revisions. Responses have been grouped into three categories: Agree (combined “strongly” agree and “agree”), neutral, and disagree (combined “disagree” and “strongly disagree”). The quantitative data collected in this round allowed us to measure the degree of expert agreement and refine the model for the final round.

Table 8. Round 2, Extent of Agreement: Levels of Collaboration: Titles (N=27)

Levels: Titles	**% Agree**	**% Neutral**	**% Disagree**
Self-Directed	59	26	14
Curate	78	7	15

Cooperation	85	11	4
Coordination	81	15	4
Integration	89	7	4
Integrated Partnership	78	15	7
Systemic	85	4	11

Table 9. Round 2, Extent of Agreement: Levels of Collaboration: Definitions (N=27)

Levels: Definitions	**Agree %**	**Neutral %**	**Disagree %**
Self-Directed: The librarian or educator independently shares, selects, or schedules resources with little to no collaboration or communication between them.	81	11	8
Curate: Librarian provides materials or resources based on communication with educators, with minimal interaction or joint planning.	85	7.5	7.5
Cooperation: Librarian supports an educator's instruction through lesson ideas, resource sharing, or direct instruction, but planning is minimal.	82	18	0
Coordination: Librarian and educator jointly design instruction or a unit, but teach and assess separately.	82	15	3
Integration: Librarian and educator share instructional responsibilities, including planning and teaching. May include co-assessment.	96	4	0
Integrated Partnership: Full partnership involving shared planning, co-teaching, and co-assessment. Often embedded in curriculum with long-term collaboration and trust.	96	4	0
Systemic: Collaboration with the librarian is a school-wide norm; every educator partners on an integrated unit with the librarian.	78	11	11

Round 2 successfully confirmed the panel's strong overall consensus on the proposed titles and definitions. Some levels showed variation between their titles and definitions. For example, while the definitions for "Self-Directed" received high agreement (81%), its title had the lowest level of agreement (59%), suggesting a need for further refinement. As shown in Table 8, all of the definitions met the predefined threshold of ≥70% agreement. The definitions for "Integration" and "Integrated Partnership" received especially high support with 96% agreement, indicating that the participants have a clear and shared understanding of these concepts. Overall, the data from this round validated the core components of the continuum and highlighted key areas for discussion and revision in Round 3.

Round 3 focused on confirming consensus and finalizing the levels of collaboration. Participants were asked to examine the refined levels of collaboration. Data analysis again relied on descriptive statistics to determine the extent of agreement. Items with ≥80% agreement were considered to have achieved strong consensus. Items that failed to meet consensus thresholds after Round 3 were modified based on qualitative data.

Tables 10 and 11 summarize respondents' agreement with the titles and definitions of the levels of collaboration. Participants rated their level of agreement with seven options that were clarified in Round 2.

Table 10. Round 3, Extent of Agreement: Levels of Collaboration: Titles (N=29)

Levels: Titles	**% Agree**	**% Neutral**	**% Disagree**
Independent	86	4	10
Curation	93	7	0
Cooperation	90	7	3
Coordination	79	14	7
Integration	93	3.5	3.5

Partnership	100	0	0
Embedded	90	7	3

Table 11. Round 3, Extent of Agreement: Levels of Collaboration: Definitions (N=29)

Levels: Definitions	**Agree %**	**Neutral %**	**Disagree %**
Independent: The librarian or educator shares, selects, or schedules resources independently with little to no communication.	83	7	10
Curation: The librarian provides materials or resources based on communication with the educator, with minimal joint planning.	97	3	0
Cooperation: The librarian contributes instruction through lesson ideas, resource sharing, or direct instruction, but planning is minimal.	83	10	7
Coordination: The librarian and educator align instruction or content, but plan, teach, and assess separately.	93	7	0
Integration: Librarian and educator share instructional responsibilities, including planning and teaching. May include shared assessment and reflection.	93	3.5	3.5
Partnership: The librarian and educator engage in full collaboration: co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing, and reflecting together.	100	0	0
Embedded: Collaboration between librarians and educators is a school-wide norm with librarian involvement embedded in the curriculum. At the highest level, every learner would be impacted.	97	0	3

Across both tables, all levels of collaboration met the consensus threshold of ≥80% agreement, with the only exception being the title of “Coordination” (79%). The definition of “Coordination” was supported by the panel, with 93% agreeing. After examining the qualitative

data, the decision was made to adjust the language. Many panelists pointed out an overlap in wording in the "Cooperation" and "Coordination" levels. "I'm not sure how the Coordination and Cooperation sections are different. Maybe change or eliminate one of them?" and "Examples of cooperation and coordination don't show a distinction." To address this, "Cooperation" was renamed "Contribution" and the definition and example were adjusted to better distinguish general (just-in-case) instruction at the "Contribution" level from the responsive (just-in-time) instruction at the "Coordination" level.

Narrative feedback from Round 3 was analyzed qualitatively to capture refinements and insights into the final levels and definitions. Participant comments were especially valuable in contextualizing the continuum within school librarian practice and in naming conditions not fully described in earlier rounds. Several panelists questioned whether "Independent" meant no communication at all and noted confusion about who was sharing resources with whom. One participant said, "Independent—little to no—it should be no—independent denotes solo," while another pointed out, "If a librarian shares resources, they must communicate this somehow." These comments suggest that "Independent" was not sufficiently precise. Renaming the level "Autonomy" clarified that this stage refers to educators or librarians working on their own with minimal cooperation, which resolved the ambiguity.

Some participants asked for clarification on the "Curation" level. "Curation needs a bit more elaboration on the definition of communication. Is it email, just in passing, a written note or form, etc.?" Another said, "The definition of Curate does not express that curation of a strong collection needs input from educators." This feedback led to refining the definition to emphasize that "Curation," at a base level, involves providing resources or support with minimal joint planning.

A participant suggested: “To distinguish better between integration and partnership… add ‘aligned to their typical roles.’” The final continuum incorporated this insight, defining “Integration” as sharing responsibilities within traditional roles, while “Partnership” begins to remove some of the boundaries of roles through co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessing.

Several panelists noted the word “Embedded” was problematic: “Embedded is a good term but its use in schools often refers to a less clear picture than this definition gives.” Others worried it implied a system-level condition rather than a stage of collaboration. In response, the level was reframed as “Assurance,” signaling systemic, schoolwide commitment to collaboration where student impact is assured. This better captured the panelists’ concerns about clarity and granularity. Table 12 includes the rationale for changing final levels.

Table 12. Rationale for Changing Levels

Round 3 Levels	**Final Levels**	**Rationale for Change**
Independent Curation Cooperation Coordination Integration Partnership Embedded	Autonomy Curation Contribution Coordination Integration Partnershp Assurance	**Independent to Autonomy:** **“**independent denotes solo” **Cooperation to Contribution:** “I’m not sure how the Coordination and Cooperation sections are different. Maybe change one of them?” **Embedded to Assurance:** “Often when something is embedded in the curriculum it is given little attention.” **Affirmation of clarity:** “I really like the differentiation of each level’s examples so that librarians can see where they are on the continuum”

Multiple panelists appreciated the clarity and utility of having distinct levels. “I like the levels. I’ve used the four levels of collaboration…but they never felt adequate enough.” This validates our refinement process: Even though there was critique, the panel agreed that clarifying

levels made the model more actionable for practitioners. Based on the feedback, the research team refined the model to increase clarity, ensure distinctions between levels, and use terminology that resonated with practice. The findings resulted in the following continuum of collaborative practice that illustrates the range of school librarian collaboration, without implying hierarchy.

1. **Autonomy:** The librarian or educator selects, shares, or schedules resources (books, digital tools, or library spaces) independently, with little communication or cooperation. *Example: For a class project, students visit the library to check out books, or an educator books the space or technology, but the librarian is not involved in planning or asked to contribute.*

2. **Curation**: The librarian selects resources and/or provides support based on communication with the educator, with minimal joint planning. *Example: After receiving a request from an educator, the librarian pulls a cart of titles for a unit or creates a digital resource list for a class.*

3. **Contribution**: The librarian contributes to instruction through lesson ideas, resource sharing, or direct instruction, but support is general and not tied to content. *Example: The librarian gives booktalks, teaches source citation, or demonstrates database use as part of general information skills instruction or when requested.*

4. **Coordination**: The librarian and educator align instruction but teach and assess separately. *Example: After learning about a class project, the librarian conducts a read-aloud or teaches a digital tool that directly supports the project content.*

5. **Integration**: The librarian and educator share instructional responsibilities, including planning and teaching aligned to their roles. May include shared assessment and reflection. *Example: The librarian and educator plan and teach a research unit together.*

6. **Partnership:** The librarian and educator engage in full collaboration: co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing, and reflecting together. *Example: The librarian and educator co-design and co-lead a unit, sharing all instructional responsibilities.*

7. **Assurance**: The librarian is involved and embedded in instructional planning across the curriculum. Collaboration between librarians and educators is a school-wide norm and every learner is impacted. *Example: The librarian works with educators across grade levels and content areas to ensure every learner experiences meaningful, consistent library-integrated instruction.*

Contemporary Strategies and Necessary Conditions

Beyond the definition and levels, the panel identified practical strategies that foster collaboration and the conditions that enable it. Table 13 presents contemporary strategies identified by the panel as effective in fostering collaboration between school librarians and other educators. Participants responded to 14 strategies that emerged from Round 1 open-ended questions, rating each as effective ("very effective" and "somewhat effective"), neutral, and ineffective ("somewhat ineffective" and "very ineffective"). The table is organized with the strategies with the most support at the top, providing insight into practical actions that promote sustained collaboration in contemporary school settings.

Table 13: Contemporary Strategies (N=27)

Strategy	% Effective	% Neutral	% Ineffective
Regularly attend team or grade-level meetings to build relationships and offer support.	96	4	0
Know the curriculum well and suggest specific projects aligned to it.	96	4	0
Make direct outreach to educators (e.g., in-person conversations, dropping by classrooms).	94	6	0
Look for the "teacher leader" in the building to help champion collaboration.	94	6	0
Build personal relationships with staff as a way to open doors for collaboration.	94	3	3
Build trust and collaboration by showing flexibility and responsiveness.	85	15	0
Lead professional development for other educators.	85	15	0
Be innovative by taking risks and trying something new.	74	22	4

Use snacks, humor, and positivity to build goodwill and approachability.	74	26	0
Create a “menu of services” or sign-up system to make collaboration easy.	70	26	4
Use social media or digital tools (e.g., podcasts, Google Docs, email) to communicate regularly.	66	33	0
Promote successful collaborations by highlighting educator partners.	60	40	0
Offer to assess or grade student work as part of collaborative teaching.	60	40	0
Use newsletters or flyers to share updates and showcase collaborative opportunities.	52	37	11

The results reveal that strategies emphasizing personal relationships and proactive communication are the most effective. Attending team meetings, making direct outreach to educators, intentionally building relationships, connecting instruction to the curriculum, and identifying teacher leaders received almost unanimous support. Strategies involving more structured communication, like using social media and newsletters, were rated as less effective, but still relevant in some contexts. These findings show that relationships and proactive practices remain central to SLC, while less conventional strategies, like risk taking, may be used to supplement a school librarian’s visibility and impact in the school.

Table 14 summarizes respondents' perceptions of the key conditions that support effective SLC. Participants rated their level of agreement with 14 statements that emerged from the data in Round 1. The conditions are presented in descending order of overall agreement, highlighting the factors most strongly endorsed by participants as essential to fostering collaborative practices within school library programs.

Table 14: Necessary Conditions (N=27)

Condition	% Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree
Dispositions like openness, flexibility, and curiosity are necessary for collaboration.	100	0	0
A school culture of trust and mutual respect among staff fosters better collaboration.	100	0	0
Collaboration should be a schoolwide expectation, not an individual initiative.	96	4	0
Educators are more likely to collaborate when they trust the instructional expertise of the librarian.	96	4	0
Administrative support is essential for successful school librarian collaboration.	93	7	0
Librarians must be visible and actively engaged in instructional initiatives to foster collaboration.	93	3.5	3.5
Mutual respect and trust between librarians and educators are foundational for collaboration.	93	3.5	3.5
Clear communication of roles and responsibilities supports effective collaboration.	93	7	0
A shared vision for student learning increases the likelihood of sustained collaboration.	93	7	0
A flexible/responsive schedule for the school librarian is a key condition for effective collaboration.	89	7	4
Collaboration is more likely when school librarians have flexible scheduling.	89	7	4
Time for collaborative planning must be built into the school day or week.	85	11	4
Consistent funding for the school library enables sustained collaboration.	81	15	4
The school librarian must take the initiative to begin collaboration.	74	19	7

Respondents emphasized relational and dispositional factors as critical to collaboration, with trust, mutual respect, and openness receiving unanimous agreement. Environmental supports such as administrative backing, scheduled collaboration time, and responsive/flexible librarian scheduling were also highly rated. The relatively lower agreement for statements related to funding and individual initiative suggests that while these conditions are important, they may be viewed as more variable across school contexts. Overall, these findings show the interaction of varying conditions in promoting sustained and effective collaboration between librarians and other educators.

Discussion

This study contributes to the scholarship on SLC by reaffirming its fundamental impact and extending it to contemporary practice. Early models such as Loertscher's (1988, 2000) taxonomy offered a detailed set of roles and levels of librarian involvement in instruction. Montiel-Overall (2005) synthesized these levels into a theory of educator-librarian collaboration presenting four models that captured a range of practice. The language of both Loertscher and Montiel-Overall is clearly incorporated into the panel's final model.

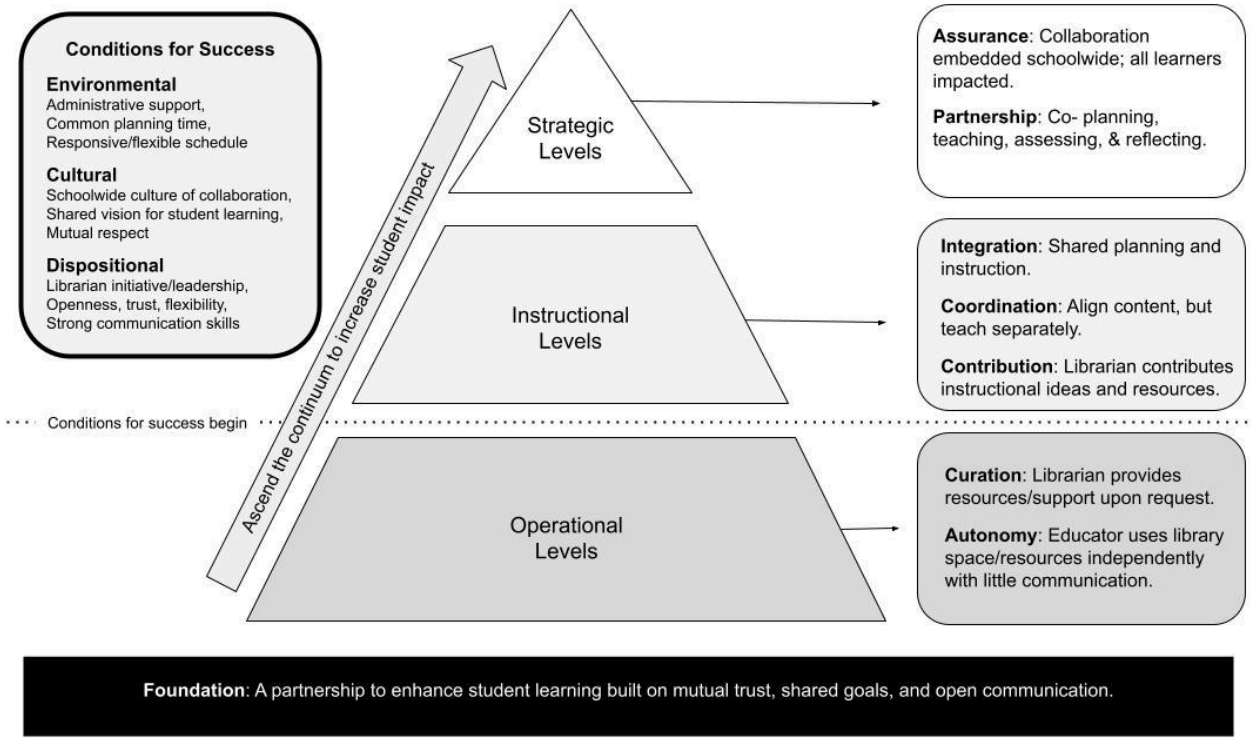
AASL standards from *Information Power* (1988) through to *The National School Library Standards* (2025) emphasized collaboration. Several ideas from the standards are incorporated into the final model of SLC. This alignment highlights how the model operationalizes the collaborative focus of the standards while offering measurable guidelines for practitioners.

The Complete Model

Taken together these findings reveal the complexity and the potential of SLC. Through the Delphi process, the panel identified a shared definition and a continuum of collaboration

including conditions that make the practice successful, resulting in the following model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Model of School Librarian Collaboration



The model stands on the foundation of the updated definition of SLC and invites school librarians to ascend the continuum in order to increase student impact. The model defines three broad categories of collaboration: Operational, instructional, and strategic. Each category encompasses specific levels that illustrate the evolving roles of school librarians and educators working together. Progression along this continuum reflects a shift from transactional interactions to more sustained schoolwide integration of collaborative practice.

The model also identifies conditions for increased success: Environmental, cultural, and dispositional. These conditions are necessary to enable instructional and strategic levels of collaboration and highlight administrator support, a culture of shared goals, and school librarian

leadership. These elements provide a comprehensive model for understanding and increasing school librarian collaboration, positioning the librarian as a critical instructional partner in enhancing student learning across the curriculum.

Practitioner Rubrics

To expand the usefulness of the model, the research team developed two rubrics for practitioners: A streamlined rubric (Figure 2) for identifying current collaboration levels and measuring impact and a detailed rubric (Appendix C) that incorporates reflection, conditions present, and goal setting to support professional growth. The rubric below classifies the various levels to make them identifiable and flexible to practitioners. As one participant stated about "Assurance," "This level encloses all of the others, and also reflects the administration's leadership priorities. I think it's not at the same level of granularity. It's not in the continuum you're trying to establish, but subsumes the other relationships you describe." Subsequently, we removed "Assurance" as a level for practitioners to have the option to include it with each of the six levels since it is possible for all students to be impacted throughout the continuum.

Figure 2. Practitioner SLC Rubric

	Autonomy	**Curation**	**Contribution**	**Coordination**	**Integration**	**Partnership**
Select your level of collaboration.	The librarian or educator selects, shares, or schedules resources (books, digital tools, or library spaces) independently, with little communication or cooperation.	The librarian provides materials, resources, or support based on communication with the educator, with minimal joint planning.	The librarian contributes to instruction through lesson ideas, resource sharing, or direct instruction, but support is general and not tied to content.	The librarian and educator align instruction but teach and assess separately.	The librarian and educator share responsibilities for planning and teaching, sometimes assessment and reflection.	The librarian and educator fully collaborate: co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing, and reflecting together.
Assurance: Were all learners in the grade (or subject level) impacted?	☐ Yes ☐ Not yet	☐ Yes ☐ Not yet	☐ Yes ☐ Not yet	☐ Yes ☐ Not yet	☐ Yes ☐ Not yet	☐ Yes ☐ Not yet

The SLC model developed through this Delphi study extends and refines existing models by establishing a consensus definition of SLC that affirms that school librarians are educators who use their own expertise as a central component of the partnership. It introduces a continuum of seven levels, differentiating shifts in practice that panel members viewed as necessary. The distinction between levels allows practitioners to precisely locate their current level and plan for future growth. Although the continuum suggests increasing scope and integration, the levels are not hierarchical; rather, each represents an equally valuable and contextually appropriate form of collaboration. This work is critical given that even after decades of discussion in the literature, the "process of collaborating... may be unfamiliar territory to many in the education profession" (Montiel-Overall, 2010, p. 48), underscoring the necessity of clear, practical models.

The integration of essential conditions is significant for contemporary school librarianship. The findings show that trust, openness, and shared goals are necessary, but

insufficient without appropriate administrative support like flexible scheduling or common planning time. By including these conditions, the model acknowledges that collaboration is not solely about individual initiative, but it is shaped by these systemic enablers and barriers.

The development of practitioner rubrics is an important contribution to the field. The rubrics created from this study operationalize the continuum into steps for advocacy, self-reflection, and professional growth. They make collaboration visible and provide common language to communicate the school librarian's role in teaching and learning which bridges the gap between research and practice.

Limitations

Like any research, our Delphi process comes with limitations, starting with "the Delphi method is not considered a rigorous research method due to few clearly defined procedures and processes" (Jones, 2018, p. 235). While our panel reached consensus on these topics, it does not directly translate to empirical evidence. These findings represent expert judgement rather than measurable outcomes.

We worked with a purposefully chosen group of highly skilled and experienced leaders in school librarianship, but their voices did not fully capture the full diversity of the field. Also, while our acceptable limit of 70% participation was always met, some panelists dropped off between rounds. This may have shaped the final results.

All data came through self-report, meaning responses reflect personal bias and subjectivity as well as perspectives and contexts. Researcher bias also likely shaped outcomes. Despite efforts to design neutral tools and interpret results objectively, the research team's own assumptions and perspectives influenced the process. In our study, we acknowledge that all three researchers brought biases that were not fully eliminated by the design, and these likely

influenced how questions were framed and how results were interpreted. These limitations underscore the importance of treating the resulting model as a research-informed tool rather than a generalizable one.

Implications

This study has significant implications for professional practice, research, and advocacy. For practitioners, this proposed model and its accompanying rubric serve as a scaffold to adapt collaboration strategies within their own contexts. They provide practical tools for facilitating discussions, setting goals, and assessing professional growth, making collaboration actionable. The model also helps to articulate the difference between a paraprofessional functioning at the operational level versus a certificated school librarian working at the instructional and strategic levels.

For researchers, this work provides a foundational framework to test, refine, and expand through future empirical studies, particularly those measuring levels of collaboration and comparing them to student learning outcomes. Future research should extend this work by empirically testing the continuum in diverse school environments, documenting how collaborations move across levels and how that movement impacts student learning outcomes. Longitudinal studies and case study research can help validate the usefulness of the model and examine how environmental, cultural, and dispositional factors support or restrict collaborative growth.

In the area of advocacy, this study offers a common language and evidence that can help explain the impact of SLC to administrators and other stakeholders, reinforcing that collaboration is a part of achieving school-wide goals.

Conclusion

This Delphi study advances the field of school librarianship by creating a consensus-based, practitioner-ready model for SLC. The resulting model offers both a descriptive continuum of practices and a prescriptive tool for professional growth. It moves beyond earlier theoretical models by incorporating contemporary environmental, cultural, and dispositional factors that shape collaboration in schools today. In doing so, it offers school librarians accessible language and a scaffolded structure to find their current practice, envision growth, and advocate for conditions that make collaboration sustainable.

It is worth noting that our own process of completing this study was itself a form of collaboration. It required having a shared vision, trust, and compromise. As with school librarian collaboration, the challenges were real but the outcomes were richer for the effort.

Just as our collaboration deepened our understanding, the resulting SLC model serves to deepen practice. It bridges a long-standing gap between theory and practice. It empowers school librarians to identify their current level of collaboration, set achievable goals, and advocate for the environmental and cultural supports necessary for systemic change. As schools continue to evolve, collaboration will remain as a foundation for effective library programs and as a pathway toward meaningful and equitable learning for all students.

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Appendix A. Recruitment Email

Dear [Participant's Name],

You are invited to participate in a Delphi study titled "Development of a Consensus Model of Collaboration for School Librarians" conducted by Susan D. Ballard, Pamela C. Harland, and Rachel V. Small. This study seeks to develop consensus on an updated, scaffolded, and practical model of collaboration in school librarianship.

We are inviting experts in the field of school librarianship to participate. The Delphi method is particularly well-suited for this study, as it engages key leaders who regularly apply their scholarly and professional judgment to share expert insights on this evolving topic. Through a structured, iterative process, panelists will respond to initial queries, and subsequent responses will refine and prioritize ideas to reach a collective agreement.

Participation Details:

- All participation will occur via email. Your responses will remain confidential, and our correspondence with you will be individual, ensuring independent contributions.
- The first round will consist of an open-ended question where you will provide five key responses, each with brief justification (100 words maximum).
- The second round will involve reviewing and prioritizing a synthesized list of responses from Round 1.
- The third round will involve gaining consensus on the responses from Round 2.
- The first query will be emailed to panelists in **April 2025**, with a two-week response window. The second and third queries will be emailed in **May and June 2025**, also with a two-week response period. The Delphi study will conclude by **July 1, 2025**.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the Informed Consent form by **March 31, 2025**, confirming your participation.

We sincerely appreciate your consideration and look forward to your valuable insights. Your expertise will contribute to shaping a more actionable and relevant model of collaboration in school librarianship.

Best regards,
Susan, Pam, and Rachel

Additional Background about this Delphi Study

What is a Delphi study?

The Delphi method is a structured research approach designed to obtain consensus among experts through multiple rounds of questionnaires. After each round, responses are summarized and shared with participants, who then have the opportunity to refine their input based on the emerging data. This iterative process continues until a group consensus is reached.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to gather input from experts in school librarianship to develop a consensus-based, updated, and scaffolded model of collaboration. This model will build on prior scholarly work, incorporate contemporary collaboration practices, and identify key environmental factors that support effective collaboration.

Research Questions:

- What does an updated model of collaboration in school librarianship look like?
- How can an updated model of collaboration in school librarianship be structured to reflect current practices, address environmental variables, consider dispositional elements, and provide practical guidance for practitioners in developing more effective partnerships with educators?

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been identified as an expert in school librarianship based on your leadership, research, contributions to school library standards, work as an educator of school librarians, or extensive professional experience in fostering collaboration. Your insights will be instrumental in shaping a model that is both research-based and practical for school librarians in various educational settings.

What will I be asked to do if I participate?

As a Delphi panel member, you will be asked to complete a series of short questionnaires designed to evaluate and refine a proposed model of collaboration. The study will involve three rounds of responses:

1. **Round 1:** You will provide open-ended responses to an initial set of questions about collaboration in school librarianship. [April 2025]
2. **Round 2:** You will review a summary of responses from Round 1 and rate the importance and clarity of key themes. [May 2025]
3. **Round 3:** You will be asked to reconsider and refine responses to achieve greater consensus. [June 2025]

Each round will require approximately **30–60 minutes** to complete, and responses will be due within two weeks of receiving each questionnaire.

Who is conducting the research?

This study is being conducted under the auspices of **Plymouth State University** by:

- **Dr. Pamela C. Harland**, Principal Investigator, Associate Professor, Library Media and Digital Learning Specialist MEd program at Plymouth State University (NH)
- **Susan D. Ballard**, Consultant, Past-AASL President, retired District Director of Library, Media and Technology (NH),
- **Dr. Rachel V. Small**, Teacher Librarian, Burlington (MA) School District

Confidentiality

- Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, known only to you and the research team.
- Direct quotes from open-ended responses may be included in study findings, but they will be anonymized and not linked to any individual participant.
- You have the option to include your name on the list of Delphi Study Panelists.

Data Protection

- Surveys will be conducted online, and responses will be securely stored on an encrypted, password-protected computer.
- Data will be used solely for research purposes, stored for the duration of the study, and deleted after three years.

What should I do next?

Thank you for considering participation in this study. If you are interested, please reply to this email confirming your participation and **complete the informed consent form**.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. We appreciate your time and expertise in shaping this important research.

Appendix B. Delphi Participants

Cassandra Barnett, Program Advisor for School Libraries, Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Mary K. Biagini, Associate Professor, Director of School Library Certification Program & Department Chair, School of Computing & Information, University of Pittsburgh

Elizabeth A. Burns, PhD, Associate Professor and Library Program Director

Becky Calzada, District Library Coordinator-Leander ISD, Leander, TX

Kathy Carroll, American Library Association Executive Board, School Librarian, Westwood High School, Blythewood, SC

Audrey P. Church, PhD, Professor of School Librarianship, Longwood University, Farmville, VA

Sharon Coatney

Ashley Cooksey, Assistant Professor & Library Media Program Director, Arkansas Tech University

Sherry R. Crow, PhD, Professor Emeritus, University of Nebraska Kearney, Kearney, NE

Gail K. Dickinson, Professor Emerita, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Old Dominion University

Lori E Donovan, retired District Supervisor, VA

Buffy Edwards

Meera Garud, Instructor, Library and Information Science, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Mary Ann Harlan

Dr. Meghan Harper, Director and Professor

Carl A. Harvey II, PhD, Associate Professor of School Librarianship, Longwood University, Farmville, VA

Dr. Heidi W Jenkins, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership, College of Education, Northeastern State University, Broken Arrow, OK

Sara Kelly Johns, Instructor, Syracuse University iSchool, School Library Program

Barbara Johnson, Instructional Technology Coordinator, Certified Librarian, Colchester Public Schools, CT

Mary Keeling

Mona Kerby, PhD, Professor of School Librarianship, McDaniel College

Lindsey Kimery, EdS, Coordinator of Library Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Nashville, TN

Kathy Lester, MLIS, Adjunct Faculty, Wayne State University School of Information Sciences

Hannah Byrd Little

David V. Loertscher, Professor, School of Information, San Jose State University

Gwenn Marchesano, MLIS, Adjunct Faculty Wayne State University School of Information Sciences

Marcia A. Mardis

Heather Moorefield-Lang, Associate Professor

Maria Muhlbauer, Graduate Library Media Program Director

Courtney Pentland

Deborah Rinio, PhD, Associate Teaching Professor and Program Leader, Library Media Certificate Program, Montana State University

Rita Reinsel Soulen, PhD, Associate Professor of Library Science, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC

Barbara Stripling, Professor Emerita, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University

Dr. Jennifer Sturge, Director School Library Endorsement Program, Antioch University

Ann Carlson Weeks, Professor of the Practice Emerita, University of Maryland, College Park

Holly Weimar, Professor & Department Chair, Library Science and Technology, Sam Houston State University

Steven Yates

Anonymous

Appendix C. Rubric, Reflection, Impact, and Goals for Practitioners

📊 School Librarian Collaboration Rubric

Project Title:

_____

Content Area:

_____

Grade Level:

_____

Class (if applicable):

_____

Circle/highlight the level of collaboration

Level	Description	Evidence
1. Autonomy	Librarian/educator works independently with little communication.	Student book checkout, teacher booking library space.
2. Curation	Librarian provides resources/support based on request, minimal planning.	Book cart pulled, digital resource list.
3. Contribution	Librarian contributes instructional ideas/resources, not tied to content.	Booktalks, database demo, citation mini-lesson.
4. Coordination	Librarian & educator align content but teach/assess separately.	Read-aloud aligned to unit, tool taught for later project use.
5. Integration	Shared responsibility for planning & teaching; may include assessment.	Co-planned research unit, shared assessments.
6. Partnership	Full collaboration: co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing, reflecting.	Jointly designed and taught unit, shared grading/reflection.
7. Assurance	Collaboration is embedded schoolwide; all learners impacted.	Librarian integrated into grade-level or curriculum planning teams.

Impact

Who was reached through this project?
☐ A small group of students
☐ One class
☐ One grade level/one subject area
☐ Multiple grades / schoolwide

Reflection

- What worked well in this collaboration?
- What barriers did you encounter?
- What could deepen collaboration next time?

Conditions Present

(Check all that applied)
☐ Administrative support
☐ Common planning time
☐ Responsive/flexible librarian schedule
☐ Consistent funding/resources
☐ School culture of trust & respect
☐ Shared vision for student learning
☐ Recognition of the librarian's instructional expertise
☐ Librarian initiative/visibility

Next Steps & Goals

Based on this project, my next collaboration goal is to:
☐ Move to the next level of collaboration (from ____ to ____)
☐ Expand impact (e.g., from one class → whole grade)
☐ Strengthen necessary conditions (e.g., advocate for more planning time, share success with admin)

Goal Statement:

This rubric was developed through a three-round Delphi study with a national panel of school library leaders (Harland, Ballard, & Small, 2025).