ISTC 789.102 Practicum in Library Media

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 In my elementary school placement, at Westowne Elementary School in Baltimore County, I experienced how a library program addresses the needs of their diverse community. Westowne Elementary is located in Catonsville, and it is mostly comprised of Caucasian and African American students, from low to middle income families. Many students at this school love to read books, however my mentor shared with me that many families don’t take their children to the public library, so they rely on the school library to check out the books they want to read. Therefore, making the library available to students throughout the day, like my mentor did, in addition to when they have library class, is a great way to meet the needs of the students and their families by allowing them to have access to library materials. My mentor has a good partnership with the public library and tries to take the Kindergartners on a field trip to the library every year to make them aware of the places in their community where they can access these materials, especially during the summer when the school library is closed. Additionally, several students in the school do not have internet access at home, therefore making them aware of places like the public library, where they can have access to these resources, as well as providing them with information that is sent home to them, rather them posted on an internet site, gives students as much equal access as possible, to necessary information. It is hard to believe that in this technology-driven society, that some students may not have internet access at home, but it is still a fact, and the school library is perfect for providing those resources to students by communicating and collaborating with their students and the community.

Not only are these students socioeconomic status diverse, but there are also students with special needs at the school that need to have resources aligned with them to meet their needs. During my time at Westowne, my mentor and I sat down with the special education Kindergarten teacher to collaborate and discuss how to meet the needs of her special education students in library class. After the meeting, we discovered new ways to actively engage these students in instruction by helping meet their physical needs more, so they could pay more attention to instruction. We had also decided to move some special education students that were doing well socially, to different tables to interact and collaborate with the general education students, so they could enhance their instruction in library class. In conclusion, no matter how diverse your school is, it is always important to collaborate and communicate with teachers, families, students, and community members to meet the needs of the students in your school. Giving students access to library materials whenever possible, making families aware of the resources in their community that they can utilize, and collaborating with teachers to pinpoint areas of need to tailor instruction to every student, in order to foster their learning, are some key aspects to have as a school library media specialist.