The role of the library media specialist is a dynamic practice that demands versatile skills. The contemporary library media specialist has clearly defined responsibilities as teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator (AASL and AECT, 1998). The expectations described for the role of instructional partner include assessing student, identifying content, identifying learning outcomes, designing learning tasks and assessments, and selecting appropriate resources. An analysis of the role of instructional partner and corresponding responsibilities indicates a need for a strong foundation in instructional design.

Although library media specialists describe the role as important, less than 10% indicate that they perform the role to any great extent (Pickard, 1990). Pickard suggests that one explanation for the discrepancy might be the result of differences between the theoretical construct of instructional design and the real-world applications practiced by library media specialists. This difference should influence the approach used for training library media specialists in instructional design. The need to increase meaningful applications of instructional design in the real-world practice of school library media specialists requires feedback from practitioners. The first stage of this project will include surveying regional school library media specialists to assess job-specific applications of various components of the instructional design process. Results of the survey will guide the selection of an instructional design model to match relevant components with the most common or frequently identified applications. Secondly, feedback from the survey will be used to structure the design of course activities. Integrating applications identified by practitioners into the course structure will provide a framework to guide prospective media specialists in the connection between theory and practice. Course activities will draw from feedback provided by practitioners so students will have an opportunity to apply instructional design to a project that reflects meaningful application of systems theory to the role of instructional partner. The school library media specialist must possess skills that form the basis of successful cooperative planning with teachers, often taking the lead in guiding essential decisions in the instructional plan. In order to be successful in the role of instructional partner, prospective school library media specialists must extend beyond mastery of instructional design knowledge.

Competence in this role requires the ability to perform critical assessment of an instructional problem, select appropriate components of instructional design for a given instructional situation, and identify appropriate solutions. The ability to perform these skills might be enhanced if real-world applications drive the selection of an instructional design model and the ensuing course activities.

Bibliography