

What's a District Consultant?

Readers of this series already have heard directly from the Executive Director of the Westmoreland Library Network (WLN) in articles published on October 14 and October 21. They heard more about him and the Technology Team in a "President's Award 2020" article published on December 9. All three articles are archived with the other articles of the series at <https://www.wlnonline.org> and <https://www.murrysvillelibrary.org>. But, you have yet to hear much about another key role on this relatively small WLN staff of six, namely the District Consultant. She is Dana Farabaugh.

What the District Consultant is not is an outside "consultant" to the WLN District Center, or any member library. The District Consultant is a full-time staff member of the WLN and acts as a "librarian for librarians," by providing advice and resources that help Library Directors and Boards best serve their communities.

The title is misleading, but it is prescribed for all 29 of PA's Library Districts, specifically defined in the Getting on Board! manual (2011) of the Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL), PA Department of Education: "On the staff is a District Consultant, who provides advisory assistance to local librarians, municipal officials, interested citizens and trustees within the district through periodic visits, district meetings and workshops. The Bureau of Library Development [under the OCL] assigns a staff member liaison to work with the District Consultant in each district center to provide services to the local public libraries. The District Consultant helps channel and interpret information from the state in order to improve services to the community. The District Consultant helps the local libraries develop long-range plans for each public library and for the district, and he/she oversees the proper filing of each library's annual report."

The WLN receives around \$300,000 each year from the OCL to provide District services, including those managed/led by the District Consultant. A key management example is overseeing the van service for distribution of books and other library materials across the county. However, her core tasks fall into the categories of marketing, continuing staff education and professional development, Board development and services, and human resources.

Marketing: The District Consultant markets library services to Westmoreland County residents by designing WLN's Annual Report and promotional materials for library programs and services, and maintaining and updating the WLN website and events calendar. Dana, for example, set up links on the WLN web site for the "Teen Power Library" of last week's column and for the archive of "The Magic Library Card!" article series.

Continuing Education and Professional Development: Pre-COVID, the WLN offered occasional continuing education opportunities for library staff and Trustees at its office computer lab. With COVID impacting our ability to gather in person, Dana now offers regular virtual trainings and is gathering a training schedule for 2021 that includes topics like cataloging, marketing, using library software, customer service, and equity,

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diversity, and inclusion. In addition to regular workshops, she also provides New Director Onboarding when a library hires a new leader, so the Director can succeed in his or her new role.

Board development and services: The District Consultant offers orientation for new Board members so they understand their roles, how their work fits in with the larger library landscape in Westmoreland County and Pennsylvania, and how WLN exists to help them and their libraries succeed. In addition to orientation, Dana works closely with member library Boards as new challenges and opportunities arise.

Director search: Dana has participated in helping member library Boards in screening and interviewing candidates for vacated Library Director positions. For example, she participated closely with the Murrysville Community Library Board in the interviewing process that led to the hiring of Amy Riegner, Library Director since January 2020.

That's a taste of what the District Consultant does to make the WLN a smoothly running organization. She is a key part of a very effective staff, whose work we have been trying to tell you about as part of this series. Thank you supporting staff, and thanks to you the patron for your support.

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