

A Look at Media Guidelines: National/Regional/State

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1975 may well be viewed as the year of the standards, with the publication in January of *Media Programs: District and School*, presenting national recommendations for school and school system media programs,¹ and with the presentation of new state guidelines for media programs for adoption by the State Board of Education on November 5-6. This look at media guidelines will highlight the national publication, identify what's happening in

Southern Association and North Carolina standards, and consider the roles of standards issued at national, regional, and state levels. Inevitably, a problem in semantics presents itself in the discussion: that of the different meanings attached to the words "standards" and "guidelines." The Joint Editorial Committee for the national document, representing the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), considered both terms and the various definitions offered for them, employed both terms — interchangeably — in the introduction, but avoided the issue in the title chosen for the publication, *Media Programs: District and*

¹ American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, *Media Programs: District and School* (Chicago: American Library Association; Washington, D.C.: Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1975.)

School. For the rest of this presentation I shall use the term "standards," unless the word "guidelines" is used as a title, in keeping with the following view of standards:

Standards may be interpreted variously as the pattern of an ideal, a model procedure, a measure for appraisal, a stimulus for future development and improvement and as an instrument to assist decision and action...²

Highlights of the national standards, *Media Programs: District and School*, include the approach used in their development. More than fifty persons were represented on the two task forces and the Joint Editorial Committee who worked on the manuscript, and countless others responded to drafts and made suggestions at hearings scheduled during association meetings. The standards reflect a broad base of professional participation and present the best thinking of many professionals in library and information science, educational technology, and related fields. Members of the Joint Editorial Committee shared the following views about the standards document.

It must focus on the learner. *Media Programs: District and School* emphasizes the fact that school and district (school system) media programs exist for one primary purpose, the improvement of the quality of educational experiences for learners. To fulfill this purpose, media professionals work both directly and indirectly with students; they also work closely with teachers, administrators, and consultants to facilitate and shape learning experiences. Whatever the immediate target group and

the particular activity, however, the central purpose is to improve learning opportunities for individual students.

It must reflect the relationships among media programs. The document recognizes that no individual school and no school system media programs operate independently; each is influenced by the other. Likewise, they share the responsibility to reach out to the community of which they are a part, to extend program capabilities by cooperation with regional and state media programs, and to participate in networking arrangements that expand the information sources available to users. This recognition led to the major decision to combine in one document standards for individual school and school system media programs.

It must focus on program (rather than things). The basic frame of reference in the publication is the media program, rather than the media center. The concept of program, developed in Chapter II of the publication, focuses on human behaviors and interactions, people working with people. A list of user behaviors — activities in which users of quality media programs are engaged — is supplied to emphasize the purpose underlying media program functions. Program functions (which include the design, consultation, information, and administration functions) are distinguished from resources (defined as personnel, materials, equipment, and facilities) and from operations (which include, among others, purchasing, maintenance, access and delivery systems, and media production services). In this view a media program is achieved by the purposeful combination of resources to meet user needs, and program quality is determined by effectiveness in achieving purposes —

² Felix E. Hirsch, "Introduction: Why Do We Need Standards?" *LIBRARY TRENDS* 21 (October 1972): 160.

rather than by counting the numbers of resources at hand.

It must reflect systematic approaches to program development. The recommendations throughout *Media Programs: District and School* reflect the need to tailor a particular program to its school or district setting and the characteristics of the user group. They call for systematic approaches to planning, implementing, and evaluating program components.

It must provide for flexibility in recommendations. The publication recognizes alternatives and options in many contexts. For example, it recognizes that the emphasis given to particular operations (such as television production) will vary, depending on local needs and conditions. It presents alternative patterns in staffing based on individual program requirements. It identifies many variables for consideration in building media collections. The chapter on "Collections" clusters related presentation forms: print materials, visual materials: still images, visual materials: moving images, auditory formats, tactile formats and instructional systems, including textbooks. For each cluster, it groups materials and related equipment. And for each it gives recommendations that allow for different mixes or proportions among the materials represented, e.g., more slides than transparencies — or the reverse; more disc recordings than audio tape cassettes — or the reverse. Further, the quantitative recommendations given here range from the "base collection in the school" to "extended provisions."

In spite of changes in content and emphasis, *Media Programs: District and School* continues the concepts and principles first established in the 1969 *Standards for*

School Media Programs,³ and takes its place as part of a continuum, as a document which is future-oriented but which must be revised periodically in response to new demands and new opportunities.

The uses and influence of *Media Programs: District and School* need consideration to round out this look at the document. Frances Henne, writing in reference to the 1969 standards, identified four major functions to be served by national standards: (1) to reflect goals for the kind of media programs required for quality education, (2) to provide impetus for media program development, (3) to assist schools (and school systems) in designing media programs, and (4) to furnish criteria useful in evaluation, certification, and accreditation.⁴

One measure of the impact of the 1975 document should be its influence on the revision of regional and state standards. Typically, it takes longer for such influence to be felt at the regional level than at the state level, and this rule of thumb holds true for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The Southern Association's standards for school libraries, representing minimum criteria for accreditation of schools, have not been revised in some years. While the present standards have had a positive effect in supporting the need for an elementary school library staffed by a professional, as well as the need for additional professional and supportive staff members for libraries in larger secondary schools, they have contributed less to the improvement or broadening of

³ American Association of School Librarians and Department of Audiovisual Instruction, *Standards for School Media Programs* (Chicago: American Library Association; Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969.)

⁴ Frances Henne, "Standards for Media Programs in Schools," *LIBRARY TRENDS* 21 (October 1972): 234.

collections and services, and have not helped us meet the need for employment of media aides in elementary schools. Elsie Brumback, Assistant Director, Division of Educational Media, State Department of Public Instruction, reports that the need for revision of the Southern Association standards was recognized in a meeting held this fall. Each of us can help to underscore this need as we participate in self studies, serve on visiting committees, and work with school administrators serving on the state elementary and secondary committees of the Southern Association.

On the state front adoption of the new document *Guidelines for Media Programs*, by the State Board of Education is targeted for November 5-6. Following this action the Division of Educational Media plans to publish the document, using a loose-leaf, 8½ x 11 inch page format. Implementation workshops will be held throughout the state, one in each educational region, to introduce the guidelines and plan ways to use them effectively.

The new state guidelines reflect the national standards as well as the recommendations of public school personnel throughout the state, including the members of the NCASL Standards Committee. They provide criteria for development and evaluation of media programs at the individual school and the school system levels. While discussion of specific recommendations must wait for official approval of the guidelines, the manuscript represents an impressive, forward-looking contribution and its publication will be awaited eagerly.

Our role in the months ahead will be to inform ourselves and others concerning the national and state standards and put

them to work for us. Both publications offer valuable assistance in program planning and evaluation. The following statement, quoted from *Media Programs: District and School*, fits them both.

In *Media Programs: District and School*, AASL and AECT call for media programs that are user centered, that promote flexibility in practice based on intelligent selection from many alternatives, and that are derived from well articulated learning and program objectives. The purpose of these guidelines is to expand the possibilities for media program planners and to provide a tool for broadening concepts of the potential media programs offer for improving the educational experience. Now the challenge is made to all media professionals to use the document in their own ways to increase educational opportunities at all levels through the design and implementation of effective, responsive media programs.⁵

⁵ American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, p. 107.

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