

Special Programs and Implications for the Media Staff

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Both the North Carolina State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction are currently putting great emphasis on a number of special programs as they are being implemented. These priority programs deserve some attention, not only because they are directly related to present school media programs, but also because they hold implications for the future of such programs.

One program which is receiving a great deal of attention now in North Carolina is intermediate education. This emphasis on the educational experiences of students in grades 4, 5 and 6 is probably long overdue. These levels or grades have been the "forgotten" levels for sometime, that is if we consider the number of programs for early childhood and middle school education.

Last year a task force was formed through the Department of Public Instruction to study intermediate education. In June of this year 60 participants selected from key school units attended a two-week workshop to study trends in intermediate education, and to consider innovative ways to make these grade levels and the activities within them more interesting. One objective of the workshop was to discover ways

in which learning can be fun. The common thread in integrating the appropriate subject areas at this level is the use of a variety of educational media. This fact became apparent early in the program, and it offers the school media specialist an opportunity to contribute to special programs in intermediate education. It also offers media staff stimulation and a defined challenge.

For example, in Concord the students are arranged in family groups with rotating teachers. Media center skills are completely integrated with activities carried on by the various families, and these skills are presented as activities which are enjoyable. As families move from activity to activity, instructional media and media skills are a natural part of each activity.

As these programs become more extensive throughout the state, media personnel will become more involved. At this point, media staff should be aware of programs of this nature and visit the various schools who participated in the intermediate education workshop. A list of these schools is available from the Educational Media Division, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction.

Another special program with implications for media staff is the Extended Day Program. The State Board of Education on October 1 and 2 authorized funding to six additional local educational units for this year. At present, only one media center has been directly involved in this program. If we examine this carefully we may wonder why they have not been more involved. Media personnel could coordinate the Extended Day Program. Of course, this does not mean that the media specialist would have to man the media center from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. It does mean, however, that as coordinators media personnel would be responsible for purchasing appropriate materials and sharing the media center facility for this program. As the situation exists now, other school staff appear to be coordinating these programs and buying materials to support the programs which duplicate media center materials. We may see this program as yet another way to make the media staff indispensable in a school. As Elsie Brumback has said, it may be a good idea for us to act now and become involved in the extended day effort rather than react later when the unit superintendent instructs the school media specialist to open the media center facility for this program.

A major emphasis in education for North Carolina is reading instruction. A highly organized program is in effect, beginning in kindergarten and going through the twelfth grade. The employment of reading specialists in our schools and the recent Governor's Conference on Reading are obvious indications of the interest North Carolina has in reading improvement.

Perhaps this is due in part to a report entitled "The State Assessment of Educational Progress in North Carolina" prepared by the Division of Research of the State Department of Public Instruction, which disclosed that on the average North Carolina students lag approximately nine months behind students in the rest of the United States in vocabulary skills; seven months behind in reading comprehension; and seven to ten months behind the basic language skills.

The implications of the emphasis on reading for media staff is apparent. One of the most obvious things we must do is understand the role and the objectives of the reading specialist in the school. The reading specialist and the school media specialist are equipped to complement each other. The media specialist in collection building is aware of the type of a relevant collection of media which can be integrated into the objectives of the school's reading program. The media staff can aid in program development by cooperating with the school's reading specialist in certain types of teaching instruction. The *SCHOOL MEDIA QUARTERLY*, Fall, 1973, has an interesting article on media center services coordinated with services of the reading specialist.

In the workshop which East Carolina University conducted this past summer for media specialists who worked with reading personnel, at both the intermediate and secondary level, we identified many ways to contribute to the reading program. In the examination of activities related to reading, we naturally found that it takes dedication, understanding, and creativity in order for this type of cooperation to be effective. We also discovered that far too little is being done at the secondary school level by media personnel in regards to supporting a school reading program.

Another major emphasis in North Carolina at this time is in the area of secondary education. Media personnel at this level definitely need to extend their activities in order to give more imaginative services. This appears to be a problem area and a subject we may want to consider at our next work conference.

These special programs identified here are only a few. They have been identified to receive special emphasis in North Carolina at this time. We have not forgotten programs for exceptional children (mainstreaming), or individualized guided education and others.

The successful participation on the part of media staff in these programs hastily identified as special, reinforce predictions of the future roles for media personnel.

The publication entitled *Futurism and School Media Development*, published under a grant by the U. S. Office of Education contains the proceedings of a higher education institute held in August, 1974.

These papers reviewed a number of research studies which resulted in similar findings regarding the future of the service role of the school media specialist.

A successful media specialist in the future will need to offer a broader scope of program activities which will be required to respond to user needs. Services such as production will be necessary. Also there will probably be a shift from the traditional reference service to an information service. There will be increased emphasis on working with teachers in curriculum development. Media personnel have discussed this aspect of their position for some time, as have library/media education programs. Additionally, staff differentiation will become more a reality as we continue to respond to user needs which will change and grow from special programs.

It would seem that the common implication for media staff which these programs provide is that of extended leadership and the development of additional expertise. This is a situation in which we can assume another responsibility. It is being able to recognize and accept new responsibilities and to offer services which should take priority over other more traditional activities.

Our efforts in North Carolina toward state accreditation and Southern Association accreditation have still other implications for our media staff. One of the most obvious implications is that media personnel should take a leadership role in the preparation of the self-study report prior to the accreditation visit. We should thoroughly understand the process and place ourselves again in a position of leadership. We may accomplish this by developing a program plan using proper assessment instruments. As each school goes through its own mini self-study, media services should be a prominent part of the self-study. As the program assessments are

pooled for the school district, we can see that media receive top priority and certainly not be left out all together, if we are in a leadership position.

In school districts in which there is no media supervisor it is particularly important for media staff to become organized and offer their services or a representative of their group to their superintendent for the accreditation process. Again, the implication of the accreditation process for media staff lies in extending our role and assuming leadership activities. Through such involvement we interpret our roles, we make our services more visual, and hopefully we become more indispensable.

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that one reason media staff have had difficulty with state funding on the same basis as classroom teachers is that administrators and legislators may have found us dispensable. This concept must be changed as we move forward.

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