

The Library Media Program Is Fun

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Attitudes toward children, the way they learn, and their abilities to learn have changed considerably in the last decade. Because teaching trends in education have changed so much in recent years, today there is a greater demand for the immediate use of materials. Realization of the constant need by both students and teachers for information at the time questions would arise in class caused library media personnel in Wayne County, N. C. to reevaluate the library media services being supplied in the school system. The old concept of a library was very different from the new idea of a media center. Although books comprise the nucleus of the collection, many other types of materials are used to supplement, enrich, and often enhance the collection. All materials, books, filmstrips, prints, records used have one purpose in mind — to awaken in the student a love for books and learning. From this total look at the purpose for and services of the library media centers it was discovered that the library media services had not advanced as rapidly as was necessary to keep pace with up-dated teaching techniques. And so open flexible scheduling came to Wayne County Schools.

This was a gradual process with most schools in the system being converted to open flexible scheduling over a two year period. It was felt, and wisely so, that before students used the centers the teachers must be introduced to the use of the library media centers in the open flexi-

ble manner. This was done in the spring before school began the following fall with the principal leading in policy making. This is an important factors, because the program to be successful requires the full support of school administrators and staff.

It must be recognized that some teachers are not immediately convinced about the merits of the open flexible schedule for the library media center and will insist on bringing class groups on the same day and same time each week. However, where the majority of the teachers in a school use this system it does not take long for students not being allowed a flexible use of the media center to "get the ear of their teacher" and to convert the teacher to the open flexible schedule. One teacher expressed the opinion, "I had reservations when we began, but I wouldn't go back to the old way at all."

Open flexible scheduling has probably had more impact on students and teachers than any single program tried recently and children agree that they "like being able to get books and things when I need them — not just at a library period once a week. It's great!" A school board member reported that investigation of the program brought this report from a teacher, "I think it's the greatest program we have in this school!"

One principal said, "With open scheduling discipline has visibly improved and the

media resources are now being better utilized." Another principal said, "The library media program is effectively helping students accomplish learning goals as well as stimulating their interests. Use of the open schedule has produced many positive results. A definite increase in circulation has been evident and over-due books almost non-existent. The reaction of the students has been very favorable. A sense of self-confidence and enjoyment is observed in their conduct as they make use of media center. Through use of the open schedule, children have increased their knowledge of the many ways the media center can be useful to them. There is much more use of audio-visual materials, magazines, and research materials. Students are very self-disciplined. All students do a good job in following procedures. It is especially rewarding to observe primary children working independently in using skills necessary to meet their needs. Students have verbally expressed 'a sense of freedom' within the present media program."

In each of the Wayne County, North Carolina schools the media program tries to provide prompt and efficient access to the media staff, to the materials in the collections, and to the school media facility. Comfortable and attractive new facilities provide easier access to materials for the students and teachers. The program circulates equipment and materials for the use throughout the school and at home. Possibly the thing that has been the most exciting aspect of the total program has been the change from rigid library scheduling to an open flexible type schedule.

Under the present open flexible system, no student of any grade level visits the media center without a specific purpose. Classes are no longer scheduled on a cer-

tain day at a certain time, but teachers and students use the center when the need arises. If the student seems slow to find his own reasons for a visit, the teacher subtly suggests a need that will take him there. Teachers and media specialists see that students are better motivated, individually responsible, and are using the center when the need to do so arises. Circulation has increased, but the real joy is that the circulation of material is for use and not just because students are required to "check out a book."

High schools have operated for years under an open flexible type of schedule, but it is only in the past four years that the concept has moved into the elementary school.

Even with the flexibility of this program, a large professional staff is not required. In most cases with a student body of 1200, one professional and one aide manage the program with the help of students. Because of increased return and borrowing materials, in the larger schools a media aide is almost a necessity for operation of a successful program. Occasionally parent volunteers assist but, while a great help, they are not a necessity. In schools with less than 400 students the professional manages with only help from students. In all cases additional help would be welcome and would result in the rendering of additional individualized service. But a good serviceable program can be operated with only one aide in addition to the professionals even in the large schools.

In the Eastern Wayne Media Center, a school with approximately 1200 students and one professional and one aide, each student who visits the center unaccompanied by the teacher wears an approximately colored clothespin (provided to teachers by media specialists) indicating

the type of experiences he is to be engaged in:

Clothespin color

- Green — audiovisual usage
- Blue — circulation of books
- Yellow — periodical usage
- Red — reference work
- Orange — student librarian

In this way it is possible for the media specialist to tell at a glance if the student is doing what he was excused from class to do. If he is abusing the privilege (this does happen, but rarely) he will be denied the use of the center for an appropriate time.

Each elementary school uses somewhat this same type of system, although sometimes instead of a clothespin, large letters or little wooden satchels are used, but whatever the type of task a purpose is evident for the visit.

Students check out their own materials. They stamp the cards and then place the cards on a shelf in a box or can designated for their use. In the elementary schools the name and picture of the teacher are glued to the box or can for easy identification. When students return materials they place them on a shelf holding the box designating their room. A student aide or the library media specialist takes the books from the shelves and cards them before returning them to their proper shelf space. In the elementary and junior high schools two students from each class serve as class librarians. In the high schools students enrolled in the library science class serve as student assistants. Student assistants learn as they work and help with the shelving and carding of materials. It is not unusual to see first and second graders go about the business of returning a book, selecting, often with the use of the card catalog, another piece of material, checking it out, and leaving the center without ever having spoken to another person. Such indepen-

dence in the lower grades is bound to produce better work/study habits as the student progresses through the school.

In some centers there are designated times when teacher accompanied classes may be scheduled to the library media center. But the center is not closed to other individual students at this time. These classes are there to do reference work and not just to check out books. Both teacher and media specialists find that keeping these groups supplied with materials demands both effort and ingenuity. Reference materials, including encyclopedias, may be checked out for overnight use.

It is true that under this open flexible scheduling unpredictable situations result for the media specialists. Sometimes capacity groups appear at once, whereas, at other times there are few students in the center. The Wayne County media specialists feel that the positive results outweigh the occasional inconvenience and uncertainty that the arrangement evokes.

Formal library media skills lessons are not taught as in the old days because open flexible scheduling allows these skills to be offered on a flexible basis. After initial orientation at the beginning of the school year, most students have been able to pursue their individual interests with some individual help from the media specialist. In the high schools the computer is used to teach library skills lessons and tests, but these are used at the desire of the student, not as a requirement. Most high school age students enjoy using the computer and feel as if the library media center is atune to the computer age in which they live. In the elementary grades the buddy system is used; when there is a student who has difficulty with a certain media function, another student proficient in this use is sent along with him to help. Both students gain by this experience.

When methods of teaching library skills are discussed by teachers and media specialists the general feeling is that the old Chinese proverb holds true. It states:

- I hear and forget.
- I see and remember.
- I do and I understand.

Skills are taught at the time the student uses and needs them and not be a formal lesson that will soon be forgotten. By having students use the center when they feel a need to use it, it is felt that the student will learn, understand, and retain the knowledge.

Classroom teachers consult with library media specialists to plan future class research, learning skills lessons, and even story hours. Large groups upon teacher request can be accommodated as well as individuals and small groups. Through teacher/media specialist planning library media skills are coordinated with classroom activities and follow-up activities that can be scheduled in either the classroom or library media center. Teachers are what really make things go in the library media centers. The students cannot enjoy a successful media program without the cooperation of the teacher. Since individual interests are explored and followed rather than rigid controls exerted, exceptional children are given a chance to show what talents they possess. Movies, story hours, etc., offer to the child who has been deprived of readiness learning experiences a chance to explore and develop, and find a motivation to read and to learn.

Children love the freedom of movement this open flexible scheduling allows and quickly become acclimated to it. They are invariably delighted by the wide variety of materials that are available for their use. These materials have been there all the time, but students just did not get to use

them due to lack of time in the media centers. The student experiences success each time he completes a media center visits, and has a new learning experience on which to build toward more sophisticated problems of work. Students become excited about being able to go ahead on their own, and so are achieving self-confidence.

In writing about a project of this type, it is so easy to overlook numerous examples of work done and attitudes felt towards the program. Wonderful things are happening in the media program, and it seems that these expressions from system teachers portray much of the type of work and attitudes found in the program.

Following are unedited user responses by teachers and students:

"Specific ways in which our media program helps math lab users are by teaching the following:

1. Use and care of drill tapes and cassette players.
2. How to follow directions on the drill tapes.
3. Use and care of filmstrip projectors and previewers, and drill on filmstrip use.
4. Use of record player and care of records and players, and where to begin a record when operating the player.
5. Use of tape recorders; how to record and erase.
6. Library media skills."

—A Math Laboratory Teacher

"The library program has helped the gifted and talented class in that they can read as many books as they desire. They are able to do research on various topics using books as well as encyclopedias. The experience of carding and shelving books is good for children. They

learn to use the library independently. Also, library helpers help secure needed books."

—Mrs. V. Cherry

—Mrs. S. Frazier

"Each student receives the identity of an individual when he is allowed to work independently in the media center. This system has encouraged independence rather than dependence on group participation."

—Mrs. B. Mozingo

"The media center encourages students to work independently. As a teacher, the media center has helped me a great deal, by allowing my students to work at their own rate and speed. I can send students there to do reports or look up information any time — right at the time when a subject is still fresh in their minds. This means a lot to the students."

—Mrs. K. Ginn

"The flexible schedule stimulates capable readers and allows for independent work."

—Mrs. D. Henson

—Mrs. J. Mozingo

"The library program provides an opportunity for kindergarten and first graders to assume responsibility, gain independence, and generally become familiar with the media center."

—Mrs. S. Smith

Students

"If you have to have a report ready in a few days, and you just go weekly, the library is not going to be much help." —Steve H.

"It helps you have something to

read when you finish your work. It's something to keep you going when you have nothing to do." —Tony

"It lets me go and check out a book any day without waiting a whole week to go to the library and check out a book I need for reports and other projects." — Todd S.

"You don't have to be back in the room in five minutes." — Suzy

"When I go to the library it is not so full. That's why I like it better. The four years I went to _____, we went all together and it was so boring." —Robin G.

"Well, you get to read and if you are working on a report and you have to have it turned in by the next day, you can go to the library and get what you need." —Steven

"Because you can go almost any time if your teacher will let you. And it's open all school hours." —Kevin B.

"I like it because I can learn more by going more often." — Mike L.

"Because you don't have to sit around and want to get another book — you can go any time you want to." —Greg

"This way I can go whenever I have spare time." —Gloria

"Because when I need to study something, I can tell the teacher and she will let me go. And if I go once a week, I wouldn't be able to study." —Jeri

Attitudes such as these are what we try to foster in the media program because we feel that the child who has fun and enjoys the environment and the work will be the child who learns. We strive to make the media program fun as well as a stimulating mental experience.

There is much we want to continue in the growth of the media program. Often, things seem to move too slowly, but without dreams and plans, the future would indeed be dull. We hope to continue to help make learning fun.



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