
The Teaching Role of the Secondary Media Coordinator: Making It Work

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An exemplary media program at the secondary level requires that the media coordinator provide a unified program of services to administrators, faculty, students, and community. Good management skills are necessary to administer the program. Effective planning, organizing, and implementing of services, resources, funds, time, and records are essential in keeping the program running smoothly and efficiently.

The media coordinator must plan and implement a good public relations program which will effectively communicate to users the available services and resources. The image of the media coordinator and the media program are very important in gaining support for the center and its activities.

From video to computers to laser disc players, the media coordinator must be proficient in the use of each. Advances in technology demand that media coordinators be aware of trends, know how to operate the available hardware, encourage students and teachers to use new technology, and assist them in using it effectively.

A good production program must also be maintained. This will include supplying necessary equipment and materials, anticipating future needs, and instructing and encouraging students and teachers in the production of their own media.

Involvement in professional development is another important aspect of the media coordinator's role. Not only must s/he belong to professional organizations, but s/he also must share time and ideas with others.

An exemplary program, however, would not be complete without the instructional component. Media coordinators usually agree that management, public relations, technology, production, and professional involvement are definitely part of the program even though some media programs may not always be strong in all of these areas. The teaching role at the secondary level, however, has been a problem area. Media

coordinators readily agree that orientation and a brief reinforcement session on the *Readers' Guide* and the card catalog are part of the instructional role. We are less willing to commit to planning, developing, and teaching skills in the various curriculum areas. The advent of the career ladder programs has placed an emphasis on the teaching role of the secondary media coordinator. The result has often been frustration and anger.

The teaching role is not the only focus of a secondary media program. A unified program which considers each component of the program to be of equal importance should be the goal of media programs; however, the instructional role *must* receive equal importance.

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Where to begin and what to do next are the biggest problems in planning an instructional program which involves curriculum integration. With determination to improve the teaching component of our program at East Mecklenburg High School and to make it work, we set out to develop a skills program that taught skills within the curriculum areas rather than in isolation. We already knew that teaching skills in isolation did not work.

For anyone who feels uncomfortable with the teaching role and would like to know where to begin in improving that role, we would like to share some of our ideas and some of the things that we have learned. First of all, what does it mean to teach skills in conjunction with classroom instruction? Communication (written and oral), cooperation (teacher and media coordinator), and planning are the keys to the success of the concept. The process may begin with an individual teacher, but the goal is cooperation with all faculty members.

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Hints for Making it Work

Make the First Move. The media coordinator should make the first move. Begin with one or two teachers who appear receptive to new ideas. Have some plans and ideas on paper. It always helps to have some activities outlined ahead of time. Let teachers know what you have available and offer suggestions for integrating media skills with their instructional units.

Find Out What's Happening in the Classroom. The media coordinator must understand what is taking place in the classroom. Plan sheets can be distributed which teachers may use to keep you aware of their activities, projects, and units. Time must be scheduled with teachers for planning. Talk with them informally. Attend departmental or curriculum meetings. Let them know that you want to be involved in the instructional process. Visiting the classroom is another way to learn about what is happening. Look at student projects and displays of their work, but never let the teacher feel that you are spying.

Determine Student Needs. The media coordinator and the teacher need to make an assessment of student needs to determine what media skills should be taught. A media skills test which looks at general knowledge, as well as specialized resources, is an excellent way to make this assessment. It can also be used as a pretest/posttest. We developed our own media skills test which consists of three distinct sections. One section of questions concentrates on general knowledge of reference sources, the second group of questions covers knowledge of production resources and equipment, and the third set of questions looks at specialized resources. The third section of questions can be changed to cover each of the different curriculum areas. Having the media skills test on the computer makes changing the third section of questions very easy. Plenty of commercial tests are available which could also be used. The September 1985 issue of *School Library Media Activities Monthly* contains an article on commercial tests which are available for assessing student performance in media skills.

Plan! Plan! Plan! *The North Carolina Competency-Based Curriculum for Library/Media and Computer Skills*, as well as subject area curriculum guides, should be used when deciding which skills to teach in relation to classroom concepts that are being taught. It is important to make sure that faculty is aware of the State goals for Library/Media and Computer Skills.

A variety of commercial aids is available to help in planning skills lessons. *Instruction in School Library Media Center Use*, edited by Tho-

mas Hart, provides hundreds of sample activities and creative ideas for involving the media center in the instructional program. Information is available on skills tests, strategies for teaching, and materials to aid in teaching skills, both print and nonprint.

Phillip Turner's *Helping Teachers Teach: A School Library Media Specialist's Role* is an excellent source for media coordinators who are interested in becoming actively involved in curriculum planning. We found the sections on Test Design, Needs Assessment, Activities Development, and Evaluation especially helpful. The Appendix provides a sample unit complete with performance objectives, a sample lesson plan, and evaluation strategies. The emphasis in Turner's work is placed on practical ways to help teachers create, implement, and evaluate instruction and media integration.

Thomas Walker's and Kay Montgomery's *Teaching Library Media Skills* is designed for K-8 but is certainly helpful in the secondary planning process. It emphasizes the importance of integrated library media instruction and offers an excellent guide for implementing the program. Sample activities, outlines, and an extensive bibliography of materials are included.

Teaching Library Skills and *Curriculum Involvement* are two other publications which might be helpful. They are spiral-bound workbooks which are available from Linworth Publishing. *Teaching Library Skills* offers actual examples of classroom lessons and samples of materials used. *Curriculum Involvement* looks at practical, tested ideas for involving the media center in the curriculum.

Choose Best Format/Technique. When the media coordinator has decided which skills are to be taught, then he must make a decision concerning which media format or technique would work best in presenting these skills to classes—slides, videotape, transparencies, hands-on, lecture, demonstrations, learning centers, etc. The learning characteristics and level of the students in the class and the type of skills being taught will be important factors in making this decision. The teacher will certainly be able to help determine the students' learning characteristics and level.

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Provide for Evaluation. A method of evaluation to be used by students, as well as the media coordinator and the teacher, needs to be developed. At East Mecklenburg we often use a brief evaluation form which the students complete following special skills instruction. For those who may fear the comments from students, we have found they are much kinder to us than we are to ourselves. Comparison of results on a pretest/post test is certainly a good way for the media coordinator and the teacher to evaluate skills teaching. Actual performance of students on follow-up activities is another evaluation tool. Turner's book may also prove helpful in developing effective evaluations.

Be Persistent. Once is never enough! Remember that it takes time and effort to make it work. You may need to try different approaches. Do not get discouraged if the faculty fails to beat down your door in response to your offers. It usually takes several contacts before teachers will agree to try planning for skills teaching with you. A successful media program, however, needs media skills teaching which is related to classroom activities and integrated into the curriculum.

Examples of Skills Integration

We have used cooperative planning to integrate media skills in most curriculum areas at East Mecklenburg. Below are some specific examples which we have used successfully. The subject area, unit topic, and student concepts to be developed are highlighted in each example. If the media skills were coordinated with a specific assignment rather than the entire unit, the assignment is given.

1. **World History**—Current Events (Length—One Quarter)

Students

- learn to plan and script videotaped newscast of current events each week.
- learn to use lettering tools to design their credits for each videotape.
- learn to improve public speaking techniques and stage presence.

2. **Vocational Classes**—Job Interview Skills

Students

- study job interview techniques in the classroom.
- participate in videotaped job interview conducted by community volunteer.
- view and critique their interview.
- repeat interview.
- improve skills after viewing their first review.

3. **Science/Chemistry**—Scientific Discoveries/Achievements

Assignment—Students will research a scientist in relation to his discovery, theory, etc.

Students

- learn skills in using specialized reference sources.
- learn skills in using *Readers' Guide*.
- learn skills in using biographical sources—*Current Biography*, *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Biography*, *Dictionary of Scientists*, *Asimov's Biographical Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, *Concise Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, etc.
- learn skills in using microfilm/microfiche.

The media coordinator must understand what is taking place in the classroom.

4. **Science/Biology**—Diseases

Assignment—Students will research a disease—the symptoms, cures, etc.

Students

- learn skills in using medical dictionaries and encyclopedias.
- use card catalog and Dewey areas, as well as vertical file and human resource file, to locate information.
- learn skills in using *Readers' Guide* for locating information on current topics—AIDS, anorexia, herpes, sickle cell, Tay Sachs, etc.
- use *SIRS* collection.
- learn skills in using microfilm/microfiche.

5. **English**—Research Paper (Seniors)

Assignment—Students will complete a research paper on the critical analysis of a British author's works.

Students

- review outlining, forms for footnotes, bibliographies, etc., in classroom.
- receive introduction to literary criticism in classroom and media center.
- receive instruction in using works containing criticism—*Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *British Writers*, *Critical Survey of Long Fiction*, *Moulton's Library of Literary Criticism*, etc.
- review skills on using *Readers' Guide* to obtain reviews of an author's works.
- receive introduction to *Horizon* index (fine arts magazine).
- receive introduction to *New York Times* microfiche series—*Great World Writers*.

6. **Competency Classes**—Unit on Reading Charts, Tables, and Maps

Students

- use locally produced and commercially produced transparencies to learn how to interpret charts, tables, and maps.
- receive skills instruction in using atlases, geographical dictionaries, and indexes.
- learn types of charts, maps, and tables (population, political, etc.).
- complete activities which reinforce skills learned in hands-on use of the sources.
- use learning center to reinforce skills for individual needs.

(Learning center, visuals, and activities prepared by media coordinator.)

7. **Fashion Merchandising**—Designers and Their Fashions

Assignment—Students will research a designer's life and complete a project which will illustrate the fashions of the designer to other class members.

Students

- receive introduction to biographical sources which include information about designers—*Current Biography*, etc.
- review use of *Readers' Guide*.
- learn skills for making transparencies.
- learn skills for using lettering tools.
- learn skills for slide/tape productions.

Lesson Design Format

The following is a sample lesson design format for introducing media skills to secondary students. It could be used with different subject matter and adapted for use at any level.

Objective(s):

- The student will use *SIRS—Science* volumes to locate information about a current subject.
- The student will locate and compare information from two different current sources.
- The student will cite these sources correctly.

Curriculum (subject area) Objective:

This activity will be used in coordination with a science unit focusing on current scientific research.

Resources:

Locally produced videotape, activity sheets, study guide folder, and *SIRS Index, Cross Reference Guide* and notebooks of *SIRS* articles.

Instructional Role:

The library media coordinator will introduce *SIRS* and teach the students the procedure

for locating *SIRS* articles. Both the library media coordinator and the classroom teacher will cooperatively assist the students with this assignment and activity. The classroom teacher will assign and supervise follow-up activities.

... teaching skills in isolation does not work.

Activity and Procedures for Completion:

The library media coordinator will provide the students with a review of the *Readers' Guide*, another source for locating current information with which the students are already familiar. The media coordinator will play the videotape and check for understanding with a frame (fill-in the blank) exercise which will be graded.

Transparencies will then be used to reinforce the students' understanding of the *SIRS Index* and *Cross Reference Guide* booklets which are not covered in detail in the video. Students will complete the activity sheets on each concept presented including an exercise on citing *SIRS* articles correctly using the information in the study guide.

Evaluation:

Students will locate two articles in *SIRS—Science* on a current subject assigned by the teacher. Students will compare the information in these two articles in a two-page paper and write footnotes and bibliographic entries for the information.

Student success in completing this assignment will be used to evaluate the lesson.

Follow-Up:

The students will use information from a *SIRS—Science* article as one source in a research paper which the teacher will assign later.

The students will locate information from a regular *SIRS* volume for an oral presentation on a related science topic (drugs, alcohol, health, etc.)

Locally Produced Materials

Locally produced transparencies, videotapes, and slides have proven most effective for our skills teaching. They allow us to control the content and selection of sources which are covered. We have developed lesson packages on several skills, including production, specialized science resources, *Readers' Guide*, and *SIRS*. Each package includes a videotape, transparencies, lesson

plan, activity sheets, and handouts. The lesson plan is a basic one which we can adapt and change for different learning situations. The handouts are usually study guides and sample pages of information from the sources. Our package on production includes procedures for designing different projects which we present during the lesson.

A good quality videotape requires much time in preparation. Slides are equally effective and allow for easier sequence changes than the videotape. Additions and deletions of material are also easier to make with slides. Our videotapes have been an effective way to present information to students who were absent during the lesson or for review of material.

Student Production of Media

Student production of media needs to be integrated into the curriculum, along with media skills for using certain print resources. In coordinating student production, supervision should be a team effort of the media coordinator and the classroom teacher. The teacher can check content accuracy while the media coordinator assists with the production techniques and project ideas. The focus of the assignment should be the content with media production as the way of expressing the information.

The media coordinator and the teacher need to plan a step-by-step process for implementing

the projects including who will supervise each step. A check sheet with specific instructions for each production process should be available as a guide for the students; however, encourage student creativity.

At first, the media coordinator will probably need to take the lead in supervising student media production. Teachers may be learning with the students. As the teachers feel more comfortable with production, they will become more actively involved. Encourage them to do this.

We have found that displays of student projects in the media center turn out to be our most effective ones. They serve to encourage other students to use the production equipment, and they remind teachers to include student media production in their units throughout the year.

References

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