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SCHEDULING METHODS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA
CENTERS IN K-8 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by
Rose F. Hagar

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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Approved by
Professor

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ABSTRACT

Rose F. Hagar

SCHEDULING METHODS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTERS IN K-8 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

2004/05

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Master of Arts in School and Public Librarianship

School library media centers should have a program that serves all students in the community, as well as meet the needs of a diverse population. In order to develop information literacy skills and create a life-long enjoyment of reading, students must have open access to the LMC. It is the role of the library media specialist to make sure that these needs are being met. The purpose of this study was to examine the library media programming methods used in K-8 school districts throughout the state of New Jersey. The results of this study were used to develop a library media center program that would bring the Absecon Public Schools into the 21st century. Surveys were mailed to 101 library media specialists in 51 K-8 school districts throughout New Jersey. A response rate of 51% (52 out of 101) was obtained. The results showed that 96% of the media centers were professionally staffed. The most commonly used scheduling system utilized in the media centers was fixed scheduling which restricted services to patrons. The role of the LMS which ranked the lowest in importance by the school districts was that of program administrator.

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I would like to thank Dr. Marilyn Shontz for sharing her wealth of knowledge and her constant encouragement throughout the course of my program. She always told me that I could when I thought I couldn't and her tireless efforts in making sure that we all accomplished our best are immeasurable.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to –

My Family –

Randy – Your support and encouragement gave me the strength to do this. I love you!

Matthew and Brianna – Your understanding and patience throughout this time make me even more proud of both of you!

My Parents –

Mom – Thank you for everything and especially for all those labels you typed for the survey!

Dad – I know that you are watching!

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CHAPTER I

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC

Current trends in education in the public schools in our country are being dictated by the mandates set forth by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 enacted by Congress and President George W. Bush. Based on the theory that children who enter school with language and pre-reading skills are more likely to read well in the early grades and succeed in the later years, NCLB puts its main focus on literacy (U.S. Department of Education: *Introduction*). Schools are required to meet certain criteria in order to comply with NCLB. With literacy standards being the main focus of this program, the school library media center is a vital factor in reaching this goal.

One component of NCLB is the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries (LSL) program which promotes comprehensive strategies to improve student reading by improving school library services and resources. School library media centers accomplish this by providing up-to-date instructional materials aligned with the curriculum, collaboration with teachers, administrators and parents, and extending the hours of operation (U.S. Department of Education: *Improving*).

The American Library Association set forth in their position statement (1990) regarding the role of the school library media program that the program serves all of the students of the community. Library media scheduling to meet the needs of a diverse student population is a difficult task. Open student access to resource

materials is an essential key to the development of information literacy skills and to the skill of life-long reading for pleasure. The role of the library media specialist (LMS) must change in the 21st century so that these needs can be met. Unfortunately this change has not been perceived by some school system administrators, therefore limiting the effectiveness of the LMS in meeting the needs of the school community as information literate learners.

In an effort to reverse this trend in thought on the part of the school administration, the LMS must become an advocate of change. It is imperative that the LMS educate the administration to the fact that the school library media center is an invaluable resource for meeting the needs of the entire school population. In this time of NCLB and meeting achievement test scores, administrators are reaching for ways to make the “grade.” In schools where the library media center is being under utilized, the LMS must seek to inform the administration that they have the perfect resource right in their own building. The library media programs of today are based on developing a community of learners centered on the student through the provision of intellectual and physical access to materials, the provision of instruction which fosters competence and stimulates an interest in reading and using information ideas, as well as working with other educators to meet the needs of the students (American Association of School Librarians, 1998).

Purpose

In the Absecon Public Schools, the media centers in the primary and middle schools were not being utilized in a manner that allowed them to meet their maximum potential. The current school administrator directed method of fixed scheduling and

lack of support staff did not allow for equal use of the two media centers by all students, particularly those in the middle school. The purpose of this study was to examine the library media programming methods used by other New Jersey public school K-8 districts. The research attempted to answer the following questions:

- What was the district's view of the role of the LMS and the library media center, and the role both play in student achievement?
- What was the level of staffing in the library media center?
- What type of scheduling was used in the library media center and why?
- What role did the school principal play in the effective operation of the library media center?

The results of this study were used to help develop a library media center program that allowed the Absecon Public Schools to move into the 21st century.

Definitions

- Achievement test/scores – a testing instrument, typically standardized and norm referenced, used to measure how much a child has learned in relation to educational objectives (CCSSO, 2005).
- Administrator/administration – The head of an agency, for example, a principal of a school or the superintendent of a school district (McCain & Merrill, 2001).
- Fixed scheduling – A way to use a library media center when classes are scheduled for a specific day and time regardless of student need. Student access to the library media center is limited, information literacy skills are

taught in isolation, and classes may be sent without cooperative planning between the teachers and LMS (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

- Flexible scheduling – A type of library media center organization that permits classes and individual students to use the library media center as the need arises. Teachers and LMS collaborate with instruction, information literacy skills are integrated into the curriculum, and students have more open access to the library media center (McCain & Merrill, 2001).
- Library media center - A library in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves the information needs of its students and the curriculum needs of its teachers and staff, usually managed by a school librarian or library media specialist. A school library collection usually contains books, periodicals, and educational media suitable for the grade levels served (Reitz, 2004). A library media center is also referred to as the LMC.
- Library media program – For the purpose of this study: An instructional K-8 program which meets the information literacy standards and is developed and implemented by the library media specialist.
- Library media specialist (LMS) – The professional administrator or other individual with specialized training in the creation, selection, organization, maintenance, and provision of access to media of all kinds, who is also responsible for supervising a library media center (Reitz, 2004). This person also has the appropriate degree and meets the requirements for state certification (McCain & Merrill, 2001). The terms school librarian and

teacher-librarian are synonymous with the term library media specialist. The library media specialist is also referred to as the LMS.

- Role of the library media specialist –Teacher, information specialist, instructional partner, and program administrator (American Association of School Librarians, 1998).
- Support staff - Library staff members not trained as librarians who have acquired a technical understanding of library practices and procedures and contribute on a daily basis to the smooth operation of a library but are not qualified to make policy decisions or participate in other activities of a professional nature (Reitz, 2004).

Assumptions and Limitations

One assumption for this study was that no library media center has the perfect solution to scheduling and student access to materials. By surveying other library media specialists, this researcher wanted to find alternative methods and use them to create a solution to the scheduling problem in the previously mentioned school district. The researcher made the assumption that respondents answered honestly and accurately, and that the LMS can accurately reflect the principal's and district's positions.

The population was limited to K-8 school districts of a certain size in New Jersey.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research has shown that effective school library media centers (LMC) can have a positive impact on the students who use them. This impact is most noticed when looking at achievement test scores of the school students whose libraries meet all of the criteria for an effective school library program. The research presented in this chapter consists of studies that showed a correlation between library programs and student achievement test scores, the role of the library media specialist in an effective school library program, the attitude of the principal toward the school library media center, and how scheduling methods affect the success of a school library program.

School Library Programs and Student Achievement

Research completed in Colorado found that students achieved higher reading scores and had higher test averages when the LMC was better funded, there was adequate LMC staff, the collection offered a wide variety of material and formats, and the library media specialist played a support role. The socio-economic background or education of the community did not impact the results of this study (Lance, 1994).

A second study in Colorado, conducted by the same researcher, six years later netted the same results. There was a direct connection between the LMC and student achievement. Collaboration was the most important finding in this study. In schools

where the library media specialist and the classroom teacher worked together, test scores rose. The library media specialist also was an in-service trainer for teachers. Another important finding of this study was that elementary schools that were on flexible library schedules had higher test scores. These schools had a high number of students visiting the library on an individual basis, which correlated with high test scores. Indirectly, it was noted that the library media specialists who took a leadership role in the school had a higher level of teacher-LMS collaboration (Lance, Rodney and Hamilton-Pennell, 2000a).

Along with the second Colorado study, Lance and fellow researchers also conducted studies in five other states. Their Alaska study examined the relationship between library media staffing and student performance, and the specific activities carried out by the staff that affected the achievement test scores. The study showed that schools with full-time library media specialists had students who performed at proficient or above-proficient on the standardized assessment test used in Alaska in reading, language arts, and mathematics. When the data were compared the researchers found that higher achieving schools had twice the amount of library staffing as the lower achieving schools. At the elementary school level, the library staffing averaged 4.5 hours per 100 students. This directly correlated with the percentage of students scoring “proficient and above” on achievement tests.

Information Power (1998) mandated that the library media program be a climate that was conducive to learning and provide intellectual and physical access. The Alaska study measured access by the number of hours the library media center was open to serve students and faculty. These hours were regulated by the staffing levels,

particularly that of the library media specialist. While the Alaska study found no direct relationship between student achievement and hours of service per day, the level of access the hours represented affected the level of library usage, which was found to effect student achievement. In the Alaska study, analysis of the data showed that library media centers that were open longer had twice the level of staffing than those open less. This showed that there was a positive correlation between the librarian-to-student staffing ratio and how many hours per week the library was open. Although other studies have shown that library staffing was a predictor of student achievement, the Alaska study looked at the activities that account for this. These activities were: teaching information literacy skills, collaborative planning, and in-service training for teachers. There was a significant positive statistical relationship between the librarian-to-student staffing ratio and the hours of information literacy instruction. The Alaska study found collaboration to be important at only the secondary level. In-service training results from this study indicated that this role was, for the most part, done by full-time librarians. Over half of the librarians were in-service providers. When all three of these staffing activities were combined, they were predictors of higher student test scores in reading, language arts, and mathematics (Lance, Hamilton-Pennell and Rodney, 2000b).

Lance and his colleagues also looked at school library programs in Pennsylvania. This study was used to establish a link between adequate school library staffing and higher academic achievement in reading scores on the Pennsylvania state achievement test. The findings showed there was a link between the two and that it was a strong relationship. When library staffing rose, the reading scores also rose.

This correlation was not affected by variables such as school conditions or socio-economic level. There were certain characteristics that helped explain the relationship. These characteristics were: library expenditures, information resources, technology, and staff activities that integrated information literacy into the standards and curricula. In this study, three out of five schools with adequate school library staffing reported average or above average achievement test scores. At all school levels the size of library staffing correlated to the expenditures and available information resources. This correlation also held true for the relationship between staffing and integration of information literacy skills. The correlation was consistently positive and statistically significant. In Pennsylvania, higher reading scores were directly linked to LMC staffing and staff activities that integrated information literacy skills and technology. A question at the end of the study asked how much did the scores rise with a successful school library program in place. The researchers stated that when all of the predictors were maximized, achievement scores rose ten to fifteen percent (Lance, Rodney and Hamilton-Pennell, 2000c).

Ester Smith's study of Texas schools reported that schools with librarians performed higher on their state assessment test than schools that did not have librarians. The library variable was of lower value than the socio-economic variable, but it still accounted for a very significant portion of the variance at the elementary and middle school levels. Achievement test performance was associated with the following library factors on the elementary level (per student): volumes purchased, operational expenditures, networked computers, and software packages. At the middle school level the researcher identified materials for instruction and information

skills instruction as the key factors related to increased achievement test scores (Smith, 2001).

A research study conducted in Ohio by Ross Todd and Carol Kahlthau, and reported on by Todd, took a different approach. Rather than survey the professionals, the researchers went to the users themselves. They surveyed the students and the faculty of the schools. The findings were summed up in an article in *School Library Journal* aptly entitled "13,000 Kids Can't Be Wrong." The results of this survey showed that effective school libraries in Ohio were dynamic agents of learning. The library engaged students in the active process of building knowledge and understanding. The students ranked information technology in the library the highest, along with instruction by the school librarian on how to use these tools effectively for research and creating projects. Another finding was that of the role of the librarian. The role needed to be clearly defined to facilitate student learning. The survey concluded that an effective school library was "a knowledge space where students develop the appropriate information literacy scaffolds to enable them to engage with information and build new knowledge" (Todd, 2003).

In light of the mandates set forth by NCLB in 2002, Keith Curry Lance compared the findings from his Colorado, Alaska, and Pennsylvania studies, as well as from his studies in Oregon, Iowa and New Mexico. While he did find some variations from state to state, the majority of the findings were consistent. In all six states student achievement test performance was predicated by the level of development of the library media program. Achievement test scores did correlate with staffing levels, collections, and expenditures. Student performance was related to the

level of activities that the staff engaged in, particularly the media specialist. The three key areas were: teacher (information literacy for students and in-service provider for teachers), school leader, and collaborator. There was a direct correlation between individual student visits to the library and test scores. Student achievement also increased when technology was made available in the library media center (Lance, 2002).

The Role of the Library Media Specialist

The role of the library media specialist has changed dramatically over the past few years, especially with the integration of technology into the library resources and curriculum. In order to be effective in the 21st century, Carrie Lowe stated that library media specialists must commit themselves to the role of information specialist. Library media specialists should be guided by the following principles: the school library has no boundaries – it is everywhere, library media specialists should be flexible, students must become effective users of information and ideas, and information is everywhere. Her belief was that there was a need for the library and technology to work together in the schools. Students can learn when the library media specialist assumes a leadership role within the school (Lowe, 2000).

A research study was conducted in Virginia by Anne McCracken (2001) to determine the correlation between well-funded library media centers staffed with professional librarians and student achievement. In doing her research, the researcher found that there were many studies that showed that there were numerous misconceptions and differing perceptions about the role of the school library media specialist at all levels. This seemed to hold true for some media specialists

themselves, as well as faculty members and administration. The misconceptions and differing perceptions created barriers to implementing change. Lack of time was also another barrier to change. The results of the study came up with the following answers to the researcher's questions. Library media specialists perceived themselves as more important if they followed the guidelines of their role as set forth in *Information Power*. Library media specialists felt that their most important role was that of information specialist, followed by program administrator, teacher, and instructional partner. These roles were practiced by the library media specialists in the order of importance to them. Because the role of information specialist was the most important, it was practiced to a greater degree than the rest. The respondents perceived that it was very important to have the support of the administration and teachers, the use of technology, professional development, their own attitudes and perceptions, adequate funding and adequate clerical support to help expand their roles. The greatest barrier was a lack of time. The number of responsibilities combined with a lack of time made many library media specialists feel overwhelmed and unable to fully perform the duties described in *Information Power* (1998). Comments from a respondent noted that administrators were unaware of what the library media specialist did and did not consider the importance of the library in developing a curriculum that promotes learning. The fourth most common barrier to fulfilling their roles was fixed scheduling. The survey showed that elementary librarians who used a flexible schedule perceived themselves as being able to implement more of their roles than those on a fixed schedule. Those on fixed schedules were primarily used as teacher planning time (McCracken, 2001).

In the 2000-2001 school year, a web survey was completed by Kathleen Ellis to look at the integration of information technology and information literacy and the status of the library media program in independent schools. A total of seventy-six K-12 independent schools participated in the survey. The particular location of the schools was not identified in the research. The survey also asked the participants to identify ways that the administration could assist them in doing their jobs better and more efficiently. The LMSs responded that they wanted a clarification between the roles of library media specialists and technology specialists. In many instances they were one and the same. The results showed a need to articulate and clarify with teachers the professional role the library media specialist plays in meeting the information needs of both students and teachers. Respondents requested that more time be made available for increased in-school professional development. Respondents also wanted support for their larger roles within the school for integrating information literacy into the curriculum, providing time for collaboration to develop research based projects, and assurance that the library media specialists would be involved in academic committees that involve curricula. Requests for increased budgets, sufficient staffing, and increased salaries in order to keep up with certification demands were also raised by this survey (Ellis, 2001).

Jean Van Deusen stated in her research that library media specialists must also be time managers. This study involved elementary school library media specialists in Iowa, who logged their time use for two days at fifteen minute intervals. The study found that there were equal amounts of time spent on direct services and management and operational activities. When a library media specialist worked on a flexible

schedule, it was found that the teaching role did not diminish and there was no significant difference in story times with schools that operated on a flexible or mixed schedule. Library media specialists on flexible schedules gave more individual assistance to students by locating information from print and electronic sources. This study showed that there were choices that could be made to allow the library media specialist to use their time on professional work rather than clerical work. Where sufficient support staff was provided, there was a significant reduction in clerical work by the library media specialist. Library media specialists who worked on a fixed schedule had a higher instance of performing nonprofessional tasks. The implications of this study were that the output of the library media program was direct services to the patrons, there was a positive relationship between individual assistance to students and flexible scheduling, and available support staff was related to a reduction in nonprofessional tasks (van Deusen, 1996).

Ann Riedling conducted an evaluation of whether or not the roles of the school library media specialist were actually aligned with the guidelines set forth in *Information Power* (1998). In 2001, a request was sent out via listserv (listserv title not stated in research) for job descriptions from library media specialists around the country. Thirty-one were received over a three week period. The report concluded that 95% of the job descriptions provided did correlate with *Information Power* (1998), stressing information literacy, life-long learning, and the proper and efficient use of 21st century technology. The research identified several areas that needed more emphasis in the school library media center of the 21st century. These areas were: that library media specialists be leaders and take a leadership role, conduct research to

seek answers to the problems of practice, address learning differences, and be advocates for their profession and their students as independent life-long learners (Riedling, 2001).

Support of the School Principal

Many principals are unaware of the vital role that the school library media center can play in student achievement. An article by Gary Hartzell on principal support stated that when the role of the library media specialist was expanded and freed from clerical duties, the library media specialist was able to deliver important services to the principal, such as research support. This proved invaluable as an aid to supplementing information for various meetings attended by the principal which lead to improved administrative decision making. Because the principal influenced the above factors, they had an equal share in determining the quality of the library program. The school principal that encouraged collaboration and supported the LMC financially affected the extent to which information literacy was embedded into the curriculum and how state standards were being met. This article stated that principals must educate themselves to the potential of the library, see that the LMSs job was maximized to meet that potential, and evaluate both the LMS and the LMC jointly to recognize that it was integral yet distinct from classroom teaching (Hartzell, 2002).

A study completed in Canada by Dianne Oberg examined what was meant by principal support, as well as how the library media specialists went about increasing principal support. The seven library media specialists in this study identified three ways that the principal showed support. They were: working directly with the teachers, a personal commitment to the library media program, and using their role as

leader to enable the program. The principal made it clear that the teachers must be involved with the library program. The principal became a role model by being visibly involved and being able to interpret the role of the school library program to the students, faculty, other district personnel and other principals. The principal showed support through providing adequate funding for materials and clerical help. The supportive principal made time for the library media specialist and trusted their professional knowledge and expertise (Oberg, 1995).

Scheduling Methods

Three basic scheduling methods were typically used in the library media centers in the following research studies. Those methods were: fixed scheduling (students came into the LMC on a set day and time, regardless of student need), flexible scheduling (students used the LMC on an as needed basis), mixed scheduling (resembled flexible scheduling, but there were set times for some classes).

Flexible scheduling makes the library available when needed for students. A pilot study of six schools implementing flexible scheduling without funding was completed in Texas by Joy McGregor. The study showed that the majority of principals saw flexible scheduling as access at the point of need. Emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of the students at the appropriate time with consistent service. Several conclusions resulted from this study. Flexible scheduling resulted from an educational need. Principal support was critical for the implementation of flexible scheduling. Principals needed to be educated to the concept of flexible scheduling. When alternatives to teacher planning time were provided, the transition to flexible scheduling was less stressful. Successful implementation was helped by

the personal qualities of the library media specialist. Support staff played a crucial role in successful implementation of flex scheduling, allowing the library media specialist to work directly with students and teachers. One assertion which was based solely on perception, not testing, was that students appeared to be more motivated and excited about learning. The final assertion of McGregor's study was that acceptance of change comes slowly (McGregor, 1999).

Donna Shannon's study in 1996 looked at how flexible scheduling was implemented and how it evolved. One major challenge to flexible scheduling she found was teacher planning time. She found that alternatives were devised and collaboration evolved. The library media specialists in this study devised forms that were not perceived as more paperwork by the teachers. Teachers who switched to a flexible schedule felt that they became responsible for circulated materials, while others embraced the idea of open student access for books. However, rather than embracing the idea of a partnership between the library media specialist to help facilitate their program, some teachers viewed flexible scheduling as an extra burden. The library media specialists had to help these teachers find the connection between educational reform and flexible access. In order for the library media specialist to promote flexible access, they had to be effective communicators and public relations representatives for their program. One crucial factor found by Shannon was having school and district level support for the program. Also found by Shannon was that in order for flexible access to the library media program to be successful, the LMC must contain materials and resources that will entice users to keep coming in. The school must encourage cooperation and collaboration and be supportive of risk-taking.

Classroom teachers found that the students were more involved with their research projects when using a flexible schedule and the library media specialist was thought of as a team member (Shannon, 1996).

A study by Jean van Deusen and Julie Tallman (1994) on how scheduling impacts the consultation activities and the information skills instruction by the library media specialist was conducted. The results found that sixty library media specialists reported using mixed scheduling – a combination of both fixed and flexible. The study supported the idea that if library media specialists were not bound to a certain schedule their collaborative role increased. Two planning variables were looked at: the principal's expectations of how collaboration took place, and if the library media specialist looked at collaboration with teachers as a team, individually, or not at all. Again, more collaboration took place where there was flexible or mixed scheduling in place. The amount of information skills instruction was positively affected by flexible scheduling as the skills were integrated in to the curriculum. Those on a mixed schedule taught significantly more information skills. The results of this study emphasized the importance of integrating information literacy skills into classroom instruction by making the library media specialist part of the teaching team (van Deusen & Tallman, 1994).

In an effort to see how library media specialists actually spend their time, a survey was conducted by Lois Kroeker in Region 17 of Texas, that included 121 schools. The survey showed that a large percentage of school media centers were functioning without a certified library media specialist or shared their library media specialist with another school. While the majority of media specialists had aides, and

there was no relationship to enrollment regarding the hiring of the aides. Flexible scheduling showed up in only a small percentage of schools while the majority had fixed schedules. When it came to making up the LMC schedule, 47% of the media specialists made their own, while 42% said the principal made the schedule with no input from the media specialist (Kroeker, 1989).

Summary

From the literature search it was determined that several factors were important in determining the effective use of the school library media program. Research has found a correlation between the school library and student achievement test scores. In schools where the library media specialist and the classroom teacher worked together and the library media specialist was an in-service provider to the teachers, student achievement test scores were higher. There was a positive impact on student achievement test scores when students were provided with access to materials on a flexible or as needed basis in the library media center. This factor was impacted by the level of staffing provided to the library media center by the district. The better staffed the LMC was, the greater the amount of access. Library media specialists felt that they could perform their role more efficiently, and according to the guidelines set forth by *Information Power* (1998), if they were allowed to use flexible scheduling to meet the information needs of their students. Another factor that this review examined was that of principal support. By encouraging collaboration between teachers and the library media specialist, allowing the library media specialist to take a leadership role within the school, and allocating appropriate

funding for the program, the principal played an integral role in the effectiveness of the library media program.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overall Design and Justification

The design selected for the purpose of this research was a descriptive survey. According to Powell, descriptive surveys “describe the characteristics of the population being studied, estimate proportions in the population, make specific predictions, and test associational relationships” (Powell, 1997, p. 61). A survey was the most efficient way to gather data that answered the research questions from selected K-8 elementary school library media specialists throughout the state of New Jersey.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

In the Absecon Public Schools, the media centers in the primary and middle schools were not being utilized in a manner that allowed them to meet their maximum potential. The current school administrator directed method of fixed scheduling and lack of support staff did not allow for equal use of the two media centers by all students, particularly in the middle school. The purpose of this study was to examine the library media scheduling and staffing methods used by other New Jersey public school K-8 districts. The research attempted to answer the following questions:

- What was the district’s view of the role of the LMS and the library media center, and the role both play in student achievement?
- What was the level of staffing in the library media center?

- What type of scheduling was used in the library media center and why?
- What role did the school principal play in the effective operation of the library media center?

The results of this study were used to help develop a library media center program that allowed the Absecon Public Schools to move into the 21st century.

Population and Sample

The population and sample for this research study were one and the same. Library media specialists in K-8 school districts within the state of New Jersey were selected as the sample. This population was chosen so that it most closely resembled the Absecon school district this research was based upon. Due to the large number of K-8 districts throughout the state, only those schools within certain parameters were selected. Those parameters were enrollment, between 500 and 1500 students; and number of buildings in the district, one to three buildings. Setting these parameters narrowed the sample so that districts with very small enrollments (76 – 499 students) and very large enrollments (over 1500 students) were not surveyed. The sample included 51 school districts throughout the state, with a total of 101 schools. The sample was chosen from the New Jersey Department of Education School Report Card 2003-2004 web site.

Variables

The research sought to study variables that accounted for an effective school library media program. Those variables were the demographics of the school district, the role of the library media specialist, staffing of the library media center, and scheduling of the library media program.

Methods of Data Collection

Surveys were mailed on February 14, 2005 to 101 K-8 library media specialists throughout New Jersey. A two week period of response was noted for the return date. Since a 50% response return rate was achieved, a second mailing of the survey was deemed to be unnecessary. Several respondents chose to send their answers via email. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey and Appendix B for a copy of the cover letter

Instruments Used

A researcher designed descriptive survey containing twenty-six questions was used (see Appendix A). The questions were divided into four sections. The first section asked for general information regarding the size of the district and the number of LMCs. The second section dealt with LMC staffing. Questions in this section asked for the number of staff members, both professional and support, for each LMC, as well as the use of volunteer staff. The third section of the survey inquired about the scheduling methods used in each LMC, who was responsible for creating the schedule, and how the time was utilized. The fourth section dealt with the role of the LMS. This section contained questions on the district's view of the role of the LMS, how the district supported the library media program, and if the LMS kept the administration informed on the latest research regarding the effectiveness of the library media program and its positive impact on student achievement. The final question was open-ended, it asked for additional comments.

Reliability and Validity

Pre-testing of the survey was completed with a group of colleagues. During the pre-test it was determined that several changes needed to be made to the original survey to clarify the language and remove unnecessary information. Once all corrections were completed, it was determined that the instrument was reliable and the results were valid for the selected sample.

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CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Procedures/Methods Used

A survey requesting information on how library media centers in K-8 school districts were staffed and scheduled was mailed to 101 library media specialists in 51 school districts in the state of New Jersey. The survey consisted of a combination of twenty-eight structured fixed response questions and unstructured open-ended questions.

Data were collected from the returned surveys. Descriptive statistics were recorded using an Excel spreadsheet. A combination of a single digit code and real numbers was used to record the data. Two spreadsheets were used: one for questions pertaining to the district (n=37) and the other for questions pertaining to the individual schools (n=52). Open-ended questions were listed in a separate format. After collection, all data were examined to verify the coding and to look for surprising responses (Powell, 1999, p. 63).

Response Rate

Survey responses were tallied by total number returned and districts that responded. There was a response rate of 51% (52 out of 101) of all surveys mailed. The district response rate was 73% (37 out of 51). School addresses were selected from the New Jersey Department of Education 2003-2004 school report card site. The total number of library media specialist respondents to this survey was 52. Two

surveys, from 1 district, were eliminated from the results as their demographics no longer fell within the parameters of the sample population. This left a usable sample of 50 respondents.

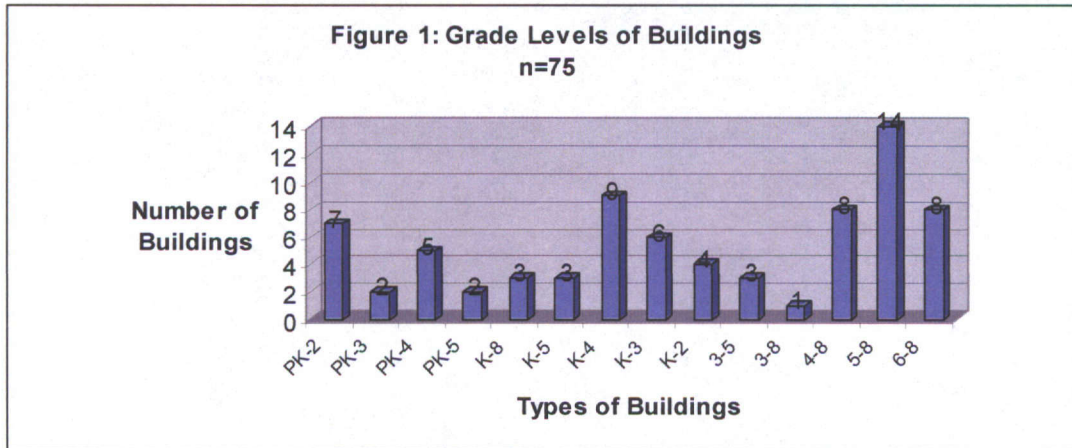
Presentation of Results

The first result of this research came not from the survey itself, but in researching the sample. New Jersey contains many K-8 districts in varying grade level configurations and sizes, running from an enrollment of only 76 to over 2500 students and from one school building to more than three buildings. Since this researcher's purpose was to survey those districts which were most like the Absecon school district stated in the research problem, sample selection by enrollment and number of buildings was chosen. As New Jersey's educational system was set up on a per city or town basis, it was found that not every county contains K-8 districts and some counties contain more than others. This resulted in surveying districts with varying budgets due to tax rates in the different communities, as well as a cross-section of the entire state.

The following information about the districts was gathered from the 50 respondents and included in the results of the data. Respondents were from 36 school districts. These districts were comprised of 75 school buildings (see Figure 1), and of those buildings only 71 contained a library media center. The researcher was unable to determine why there was not an equal number of buildings and library media centers.

The average enrollment (Question #1) of the districts surveyed was 1012.97 students. The districts contained from one to three buildings (Question #2) with

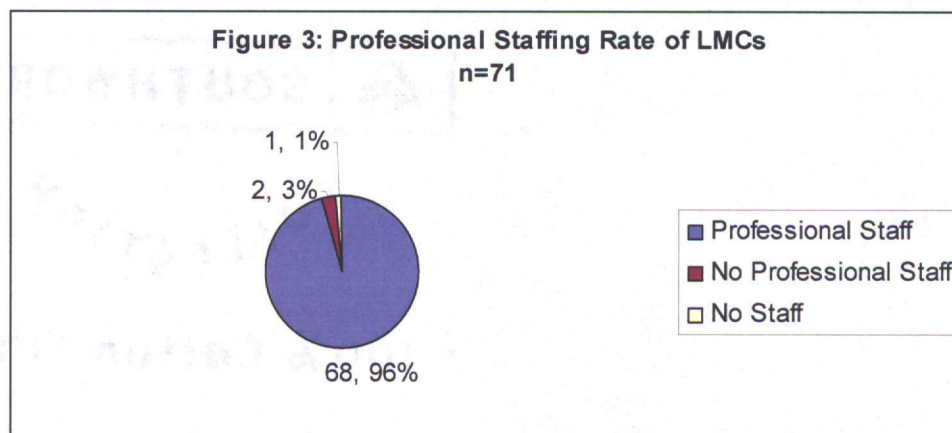
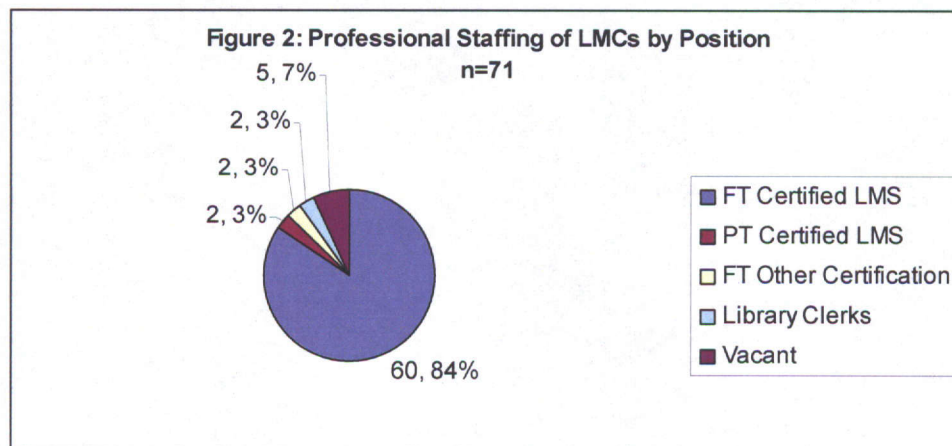
various grade levels (Question #3), the largest category being K-4 and 5-8 (see Figure 1). A total of 75 buildings were included in the results.



Library media centers were in 71 of the 75 buildings (Question #4). Staffing of the media centers (Question#5) by professional staff was fairly consistent, with some exceptions (see Figure 2). Sixty positions were filled by full-time (FT) library media specialists and two were part-time (PT). Two positions were filled with staff holding a certificate other than educational media specialist, that being a TLC (Technology, Literacy, Challenge – computer teacher, librarian, and gifted instruction) teacher, and two positions were being filled by library clerks only. This left five media centers without professional staff.

A total of 87% of the library media centers were staffed by library media specialists who held an educational media certification (Question #6). The staff positions holding other certification worked under the direction of an educational media certification holder. In two instances the full time library media specialist traveled between buildings. The library clerks in the one district were able to offer limited services to their patrons. In general, the staffing rate per library media center was good, with 96% staffed by at least one full or part time professional, either

library media specialist or certified teacher. This left 3% of the library media centers with no professional staff and 1% with no staff at all (see Figure 3).

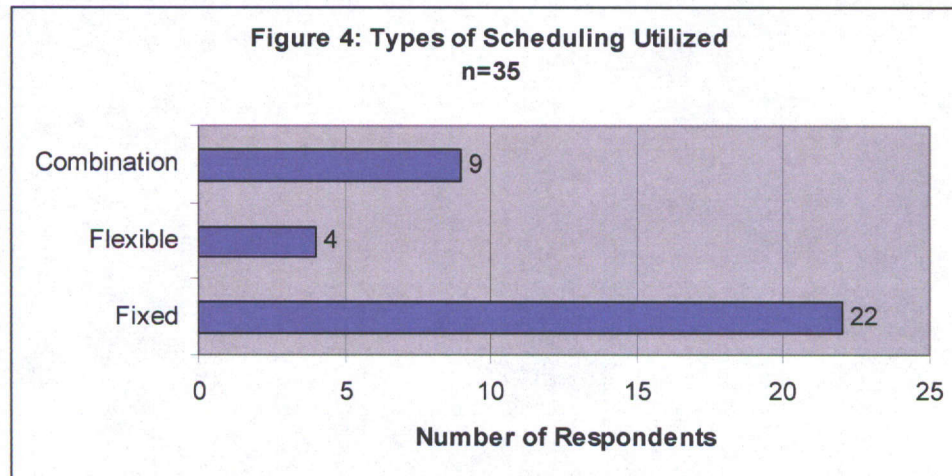


The number of support staff (Question #7) for the library media centers did not equal that of the professional staff. Only 48 library media centers had library aides working with the library media specialist (Question #8). Several of the aides were shared between buildings.

Thirty-seven of the respondents used volunteers (Question #9) to assist with the daily operation of the library media center. Thirty used parent volunteers, seven

used student volunteers, and only one used a combination of both. The number of volunteers varied due to availability. The number of volunteers ranged from as low as one to as many as fifty. Two schools used a volunteer from outside the school.

The scheduling system (Question #10) used in library media centers can be fixed, flexible or a combination of both. Respondents were asked to check off which method was utilized in their library media center. Fifteen respondents did not answer question #10. The most commonly used method was fixed. Twenty two respondents selected fixed, while only four chose flexible. There were nine respondents who used a combination of both scheduling types (see Figure 4).

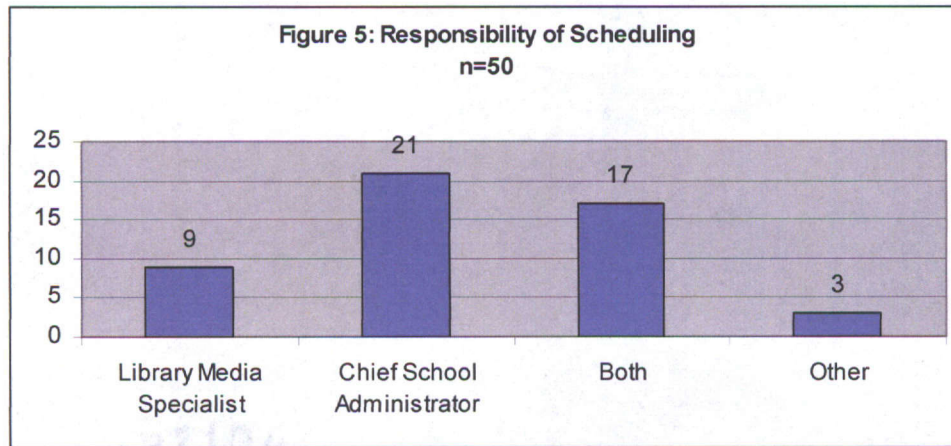


For those library media specialists who used a fixed or combined schedule (Question #11), the length of time each class was seen varied from 30 minutes per class session to fifty minutes. The average number of classes seen by the library media specialist per week for instruction (Question #12) was 11, and the average number of research classes per week was 21.

Thirty four respondents stated that they were used as a prep period (Question #13) for other teachers, while 9 responded that they were not. Seven respondents did not reply to this question.

On an average, respondents taught 17 classes per week (Question # 14). They had an average of 10 free periods per week for completing library related tasks, such as maintenance (question #15). The majority of library media specialists had 5 prep periods per week (Question #16), as per their contract, but there were respondents who had as few as 1 and as many as 8. The 4 respondents who used a flex schedule did not have a definite number of prep periods as that varied with the numbers of classes using the library media center.

Respondents were asked (Question #17) who was responsible for making up their daily schedule. Twenty-one schedules were created by the chief school administrator (principal and/or superintendent). This number was the most common occurrence, while 17 worked with the chief school administrator to create their schedule. Nine library media specialists made their own schedules. Three respondents chose the other response, with the "other" being the assistant principal, and for the schools in the district that used only clerks the schedule was made by the clerks and the teachers (see Figure 5).



When asked (Question #18) if their current scheduling system provided services to all students at all grade levels, 24 respondents replied yes while 11 replied no. Fifteen did not respond to this question. They were then asked (Question #19) if they answered no, what patrons did not receive services and what services were denied. Listed below are the responses:

- 5th grade only has book selection
- Depends on the needs of the students/teachers/groups
- 7th and 8th grades
- Grades 6-8 strictly flexible
- Gifted and Special Ed. do not have library skills classes
- No instruction, just book selection and reading time
- We only help students find what they want and check books in and out
- Only 5th grade gets instruction, book selection and story time, 6-8 research
- Only 1st -3rd grade (Kindergarten not serviced)
- One-third of the year teaching gifted and talented restricts access to the media center

- Grades 6-8 are to come with teachers with me as a resource; teachers choose not to bring them
- Grades 5 through 8

The next question (Question #20) asked the respondents for their opinion as to how well their current schedule worked for them and what changes they would make. The responses follow:

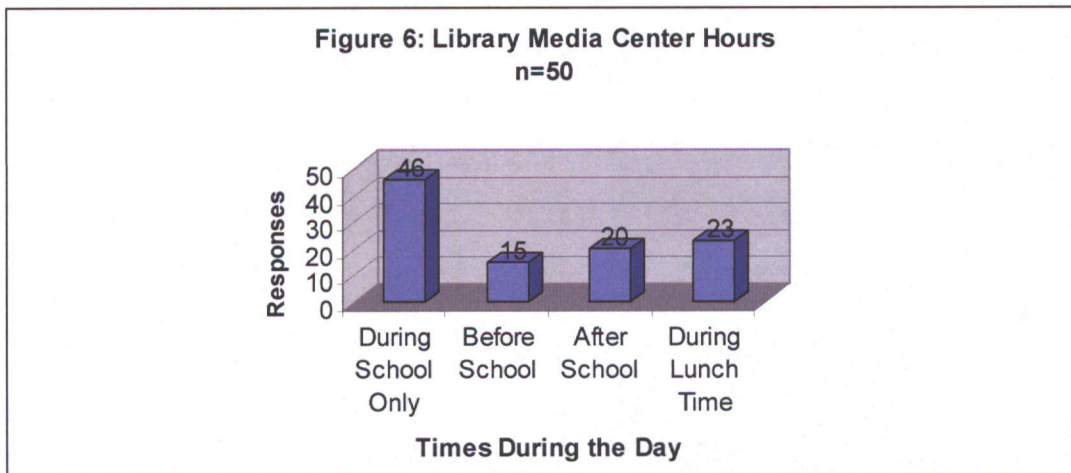
- Does not work well, not enough time at ES or MS to do an effective program
- Current is good, but need instruction time for 5th graders
- Has crippled the library program
- We have block scheduling so I teach 3 classes per day. I have one 50 minute lunch/recess duty per day. I'd rather teach a 4th period
- It works o.k., more info as to class needs would be useful
- Works pretty well. We operate on a 6-day cycle. Every other day is a flex schedule. This allows time for scheduling projects with teachers...
- Not well – I am advocating for a flexible schedule or at least some non-scheduled time
- Fine
- I would prefer to be in one school instead of both
- Would like to see everyone on the grade level
- My schedule works well because at this time the district is supporting a part time library teacher for grades 1, K, and Pre-K AM
- Afternoon is tight because of prep time coverage – would like more time in between classes

- More co-planning with teachers
- My schedule is fine – we would all love to have an LMS – but it is not in the budget
- Will be full time when the new school is ready. I will have 8 more classes per week totaling 21
- Great – just hard to get eighth graders in
- Love my schedule, I have 2 mornings free for library administrative duty, would like some flexible time to handle research projects
- My schedule is perfect, I am more a reference media specialist
- Would prefer a fixed schedule for grades 4-5 for better continuity of skills
- Wonderful schedule except when there are holidays, or snow days, they miss library that week
- None
- Would like flexible scheduling with older children to tie in with curriculum and research skills
- Full time plus full time aide as promised
- I wouldn't change anything
- It works o.k.; however 1 librarian/district is a problem. I am not at every school each week.
- Right now it is fine because 1) I am new, 2) we just came off a huge construction project, 3) no computers yet
- Works great and getting better with each marking period

- Schedule is fine. I would like whole blocks of time to work on library maintenance
- Librarian should not be a catch-all. If administrators want a gifted program they should hire appropriate staff
- Not to travel between 2 schools, 2 days at one, 3 days at another and have every class visit every week
- Great! No change
- Great schedule!
- I always make my schedule work – however I would change K library so as not to coincide with playtime on playground
- I would advocate flexible scheduling instead of a fixed program. I feel that I never have enough time
- I would have classes come in more regularly on flex-schedule time (these are whole language classes) and more additional non-whole language come in for research
- I would like shortened classes – 30 minutes
- I would like some flex schedule time
- Flexible scheduling is great for research. I have fixed scheduling for 5th and 6th grades (each for 5 months)
- No time for classroom teachers to do special projects. Almost impossible to get teachers into LMC because their only non-scheduled time is when their class is in the LMC (prep)
- Works well

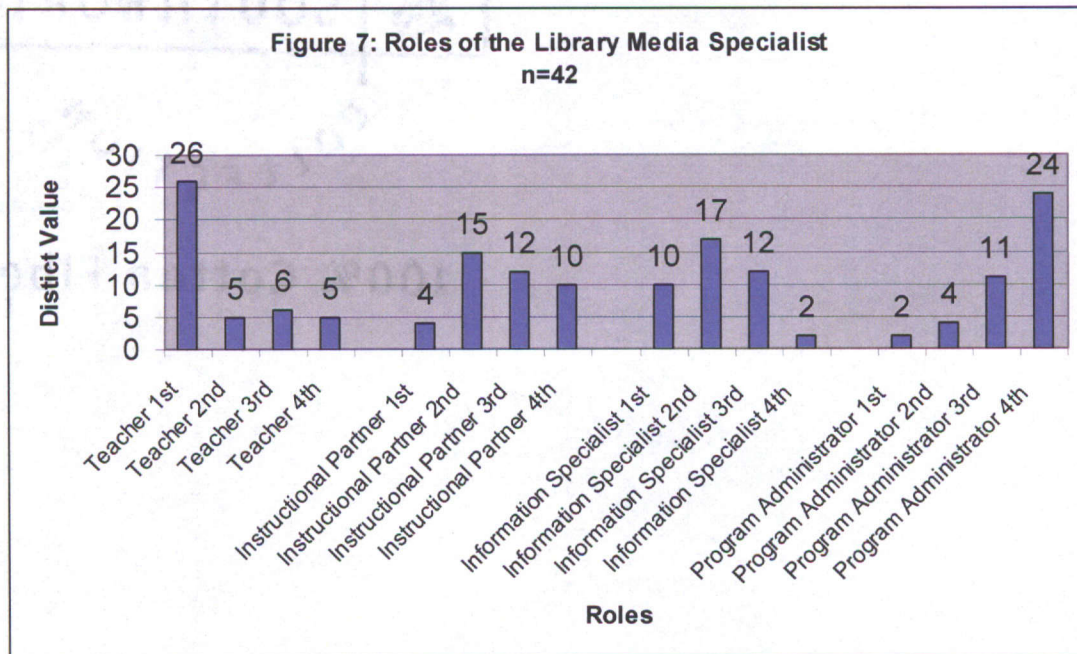
- All flex but schedule controlled by me
- Works very well
- I'm used to it
- It's o.k.

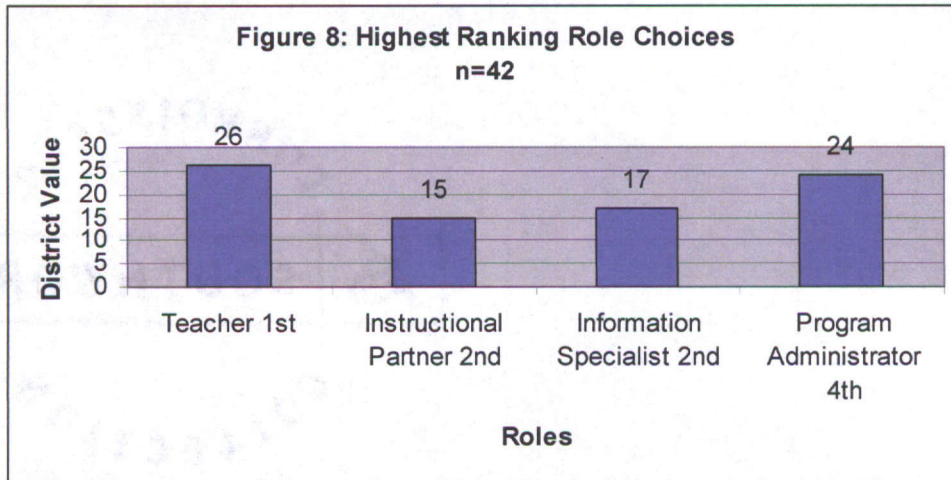
The survey asked (Question #22) if library media centers allowed students to visit the library any time it was open. Thirty-nine respondents answered yes to this question. Nine responded no, due to teaching, lunch, media specialist out of the media center or only used scheduled visits. Two did not respond. Those who allowed the students to visit were asked (Question #21) to check the times the students were allowed to come in: during school time only, before school, after school, and during lunch. The majority of library media centers, forty-six, were open only during school time. Approximately half were open during the other three listed times (see Figure 6).



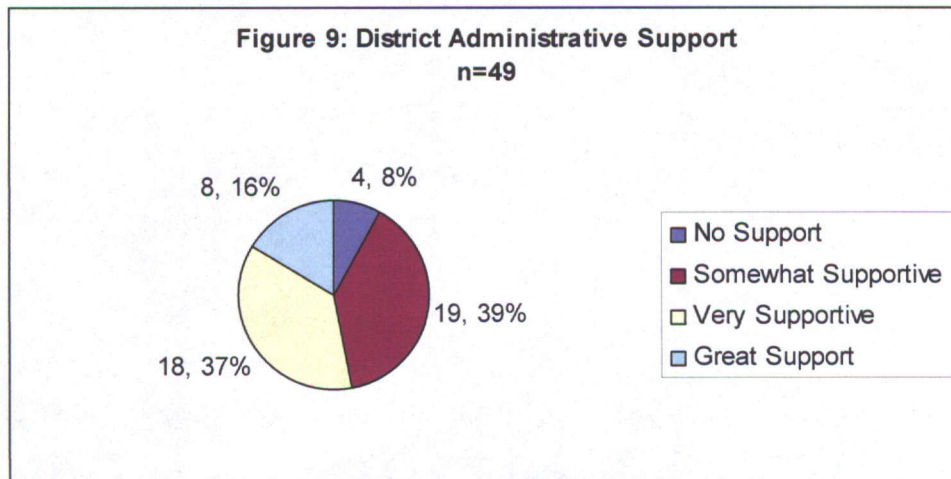
Information Power (1998) listed four roles of the library media specialist (Question #23). Those roles were teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator. The respondents were asked to rank these roles in order of importance as to how their district would rank them. According to the

responses, the teacher role ranked as first overall, chosen by the respondents as first 26 times. The role of program administrator was chosen as the least important of the four responses; getting the fourth rank 24 times (see Figure 7). Instructional partner and information specialist had 15 and 17 responses respectively in the second position of ranked importance, therefore sharing the second and third spots almost equally (see Figure 8). Six respondents did not answer this question, and 2 felt that all positions were viewed as equally important by their districts.





Respondents were asked (Question #24) to estimate the amount of support shown to the library media center by the district administration (see Figure 9). There was no response to this question from 1 LMS. Nineteen respondents felt that their district was somewhat supportive, 18 were very supportive, and 8 had great support, while 4 had no support at all.



Numerous research studies have been conducted on the positive impact of school library programs on student achievement. The respondents were asked if they were aware of this research and if so, did they inform their administrators. Forty-five respondents were aware of the current research, but five were not. Thirty-eight

responded that they did pass on the results of the research to the administration. This information was communicated through formal and informal discussions with administration and the board of education, and by passing along copies of the research and articles.

The last question asked the respondents for additional comments. Their replies follow:

- Principal is not very supportive
- Most of my library skills lessons are taught through a project approach that is integrated with classroom curriculum.
- Over the last several years I have assumed the duties to district technology coordinator – this occupies most of my time.
- Unfortunately it always comes down to money issues, especially in view of S1701 and its effects.
- I am half administration and half library.
- I am very fortunate to work for such a supportive district.
- I still have books on the shelf from the 1940s with no time for weeding, maintaining the collection.
- I am responsible for shelving all books, all library aide responsibilities, and managing the tech lab, including training and problems that occur.
- ...mixed schedule with no help. This is the best use of my talents. 7th & 8th cycle through in the academic areas so instruction is relevant.
- School district very supportive, budget is very substantial.

- Unfortunately since we are teacher/librarians we are pulled to be teachers first and LMS second. There are days the media center is closed and I am sent to be a substitute due to a teacher's absence.
- I love my job. TLC is the best combination. The children look forward to their TLC time.
- Librarians need more flexibility. Fixed scheduling and lack of support staff leaves little time for the administrative tasks.
- I believe flexible scheduling allows library/media center to be more favorably utilized.
- We have a PK-4 reading room. Library specials are taught there by an elementary teacher.
- The LMS works in the media center with the middle school students. LMS also processes all materials for PK-8.

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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

School library media centers should have a program that serves all of the students of the community, as well as meet the needs of a diverse population. In order to develop information literacy skills and create a life-long enjoyment of reading, students must have open access to the LMC. It is the role of the library media specialist to make sure that these needs are being met. The purpose of this study was to examine the library media programming methods used in K-8 school districts throughout the state of New Jersey. The results of this study would be used to develop a library media center program that would bring the Absecon Public Schools into the 21st century.

Significance of the Results

At the beginning of this study, this researcher posed several questions in an effort to help develop a more effective school library media program. The survey responses have resulted in the conclusions related to those questions.

Research Question One

What was the district's view of the role of the LMS and the library media center, and the role both played in student achievement? It was clear from the responses that most districts placed the library media specialist's role as a teacher first. The least important role was that of program administrator, yet this was the portion of the job that required a significant amount of time. The roles of information

partner and information specialist were of equal value in the center, tying for second and third positions. Several respondents were emphatic as to the role of teacher being the priority, as they were used for other instruction such as gifted instruction and a substitute teacher. Others stated that they were also the technology coordinator for the district, and one was the assistant principal and the librarian. All of these other responsibilities took time away from the students' use of the media center and did not utilize the LMS in the area that she/he was trained.

Most of the library media centers were only open during school time. Less than half were open before and/or after school. Those that were open before and after had support staff, a longer contract day, or stayed beyond their contracted time. One library media specialist received grant money to keep the library media center open evenings because the town did not have a public library.

The majority of the respondents shared the results of the studies which showed the positive impact of school libraries with their administrators. They did this both formally and informally, but did not feel that sharing this information had any effect on the administration's opinion.

Budget was only mentioned three times, two stating that there were budget restrictions and one stating that they had a very substantial budget. Although there was not a direct question as to the budgeting issue, this researcher was surprised to see only three respondents add it to their comments because at the time of the writing of this paper school funding and budget cuts were a very big issue. It was this researcher's conclusion that the answer to this question could have been determined by the tight funding issues of the time. If the districts had sufficient funding the LMS

and the library media center would be able to operate at their full potential to increase student achievement across the curriculum.

Research Question Two

What was the level of staffing in the library media center? The research showed that 96% (68) of the library media centers that responded were staffed by an individual holding a professional teaching certification. That number included educational media specialists and elementary school teachers. Three percent (2) had no professional staff operating the media center and one percent (1) had no staff at all. In those positions there were 60 full-time library media specialists and 2 part-time. Two positions were held by teachers holding another professional teaching certification and 5 library media specialist positions are vacant.

Support staff levels were much lower. Only 48 of the 71 libraries had support staff, with the titles of clerks or aides. Of the 48, only one-third (16) were full-time, the remaining were part-time. This low support staff number did not appear in any of the open-ended answers given by the respondents.

As stated in *Information Power* (1998, p. 104), a fully staffed library media center should have a certified library media specialist and a support staff person. The results of this survey show that more than half (48 out of 71) of the library media centers surveyed did meet this standard, and the remainder, with several exceptions, were meeting the requirement of having a certified LMS.

Research Question Three

What type of scheduling was used in the library media center and why? The overwhelming response to this question was fixed scheduling because the library was

used as a prep period for classroom teachers. Twenty-two respondents utilized this type of scheduling, while four utilized flexible scheduling and nine had a combination of both. Depending upon the unique situation of each school, some respondents were very pleased with the type of schedule that they had while others found it impossible to service all of the students that were in their school. The time constraints of fixed scheduling was a common issue that ran through the answers of the respondents; not having enough time to collaborate with classroom teachers was the biggest issue, followed by lack of time for library maintenance. Although no scheduling method is perfect in every situation, it is up to the library media specialist and the administration to work together to formulate the scheduling method that is optimum for their situation, one that would serve the student population in the most effective and efficient manner.

Research Question Four

What role did the school principal play in the effective operation of the library media center? The most active role that was played by the principals (chief school administrators) in this study was that of creating the schedule for the library media center. Twenty-one schedules were made solely by the principal, while 17 were made by the principal along with the library media specialist. To answer if this role played an effective part depends upon the unique situation of the media center. As mentioned in the answer above, there were several library media specialists who felt that their schedule was perfect for their situation. This comment was made by library media specialists whose schedules were made by the principal, by themselves, or by both.

The majority of library media specialists stated a lack of time in their

schedules for meeting the needs of their students and their media center. Others stated that they were scheduled for other teaching duties, district duties, and school duties which took time away from the media center. Even though the majority of library media specialists surveyed passed along the information regarding the positive impact of effective library media programs on student achievement to their administrators, it appeared from the survey results that principals made the library schedule to meet the needs of the school rather than the needs of the students. Therefore, the conclusion was drawn that the principal (or chief school administrator) played an important role in the operation of the media centers surveyed as their daily operation was based on a schedule created by that person. It was inconclusive to say if that role had a positive or negative effect on the program as more specific details were needed to determine that conclusion.

Recommendations for Further Study

With the inception of the No Child Left Behind laws and the push for higher student achievement test scores, it would be of interest to resurvey the school library media centers surveyed in this study in the future. A new survey could be distributed in several years to see if any changes have been made to improve the situations of those library media specialists who were not able to service all students at all grade levels due to scheduling, staffing or budgetary constraints. A survey of the administration might also be of interest to determine their point of view on the value of the library media center and its positive effect on student achievement. A study of budget factors should be completed; its direct impact on staffing and operation of the media center. Another avenue to explore would be to see if there is any commonality

among the various counties in the state regarding library staffing and scheduling, such as a county in northern New Jersey that is in a high socio-economic level area and one in the southern portion of the state in a lower social-economic area.

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APPENDIX A

Survey of Library Media Specialists In K - 8 Elementary Schools

General Information

1. How many students are enrolled in your district? _____
2. How many school buildings make up the district? _____
3. If more than one, what grade levels are in each building? _____
4. How many Library Media Centers are in the district? _____

Staffing

5. How many Library Media Specialists (LMS) are employed by the district?
Full Time _____ Part Time _____
6. How many LMSs per Library Media Center? _____
7. How many library aides are employed by the district?
Full Time _____ Part Time _____
8. How many library aides per Library Media Center? _____
9. Do you use volunteers in the library media center? _____
Parents _____ If yes, how many? _____
Students _____ If yes, how many? _____

Scheduling

The standard methods of scheduling used in library media centers are fixed (classes scheduled for a specific day and time) and flexible (classes and students use as the need arises):

10. What type of scheduling is used in your Library Media Center?
Fixed _____ Flexible _____ Combined _____
11. If fixed or combined, what length of time do you see each class? _____
12. If you have a combination of fixed and flexible, how many periods per week are for teaching? _____ How many periods per week for research related classes? _____
13. If you are on a fixed schedule, are you used as a prep period for classroom teachers? _____
14. How many classes do you teach per week? _____
15. How many free periods (non-scheduled times, such as library maintenance time) do you have per week? _____
16. How many prep periods do you have per week? _____
17. Who is responsible for making the library media schedule?
___ Library Media Specialist
___ Chief School Administrator (Principal and/or Superintendent)
___ Both
___ Other _____



18. Does your current scheduling system provide library services (instruction, book selection, story time, etc.) to all students and grade levels? Yes _____ No _____

19. If no, who is not serviced and what services are denied? _____

20. How well does your current schedule work for you and what changes would you make? _____

21. What are the hours of operation of your library media center?

Please check all that apply:

- During school time only
- Before school
- After school
- During lunch time

22. May students visit your library media center anytime it is open? _____

Role of the LMS

23. *Information Power* describes four roles of the library media specialist, which roles does your district feel are important?

Rank in order of importance, 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important:

- Teacher
- Instructional partner
- Information specialist
- Program administrator

24. Estimate the amount of library media support shown by your district administration:

No Support Somewhat Supportive Very Supportive Great Support

25. Are you aware of the research on the positive impact of the school library media center on student achievement? Yes _____ No _____

26. Have you communicated these results to the administration? Yes _____ No _____

27. If yes, how? _____

28. Additional comments: _____

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to complete this survey. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Rose Hagar

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609-296-3046 rfhagar@yahoo.com

APPENDIX B

February 14, 2005

Dear Library Media Specialist:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in the Program of School and Public Librarianship. As part of the requirements for my master's degree, I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Marilyn Shontz. This research serves as my master's thesis. The purpose of the research is to investigate the scheduling methods used in school library media centers in K- 8 school districts in the state of New Jersey.

I fully understand how precious your time is, but I hope you will take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete the enclosed questionnaire.

Participation in this survey is strictly voluntary, but your cooperation is essential to the success of my research. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. I, as the researcher, will be the only person with access to the survey data.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this survey, please contact me at (609) 296-3046 or by e-mail at rfhagar@yahoo.com. You can contact Dr. Marilyn Shontz at (856) 256-4500 Ext. 3858 or by email at shontz@rowan.edu.

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by February 28, 2005. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to assist me with this research and for your valuable input.

Sincerely,

Rose Hagar

