

**Marie Glover**  
**LIS 600**  
**Assignment #5**  
**Research Project Proposal**  
**November 13, 2017**

**Elementary School Media Center- Fixed or Flexible?**

The school library program needs to be an integral part of the school. Teachers and the Library Media Specialist should work together to achieve collaborative learning for all students on an as needed basis for students to learn inquiry skills, facilitate their own learning, and communicate ideas in a variety of ways. Can this truly be achieved while using a “fixed” schedule instead of a “flexible” schedule in a Library Media Program at an elementary school?

As a classroom teacher for 12 years and now a Media Specialist for the first year, my only experience with scheduling in a Media Center has been a fixed schedule, where the School Library Media Specialist met with each class in the school once a week for 45 minutes while the classroom teacher had planning time. The Media Specialist is considered a “Specialist” and equivalent to the Art, Music, and PE teachers. Now that I am the Media Specialist, I have been very curious as to what it would be like to have a more flexible schedule and if it would be advantageous to the students’ learning to utilize my expertise in a different way.

I have read many different articles and accounts of the benefits of flexible scheduling in libraries. I also recently spoke with a few Media Specialists at the North Carolina School Library Media Association’s Annual Conference in Winston Salem, NC.

I am convinced that my job as a Media Specialist would better serve my elementary school and students if I were to have a flexible media center schedule. I would really like to be

able to do the research in the future and compare teaching on a fixed schedule to teaching using a flexible schedule.

This isn't necessarily a new debate or idea. There has been research on the implementation of flexible scheduling in libraries for more than 15 years. AASL's guidelines from 1009 for school library media programs, *Empowering Learners*, recommend that school libraries have flexible scheduling "to allow for efficient and timely integration of resources into the curriculum" (AASL, 2009, p. 33). Unfortunately, the lack of scientific data from research has prevented some from supporting flexible scheduling in the US.

Some professional organizations have taken a stand on this issue. The AASL took a stand on open access through flexible scheduling in its publication, *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (AASL & Association for Educational Communications and Technology [AECT], 1998). It states, "Class visits to the library media center are scheduled to facilitate use at the point of need. Any function that restricts or interferes with open access to all resources, including scheduled classes on a fixed basis must be avoided to the fullest extent possible" (p. 28).

In Volume 9, 2006 issue of *School Library Media Research*, Joy McGregor wrote an article called, *Flexible Scheduling: Implementing an Innovation*. She wrote about interviews that were conducted at 6 elementary schools which had successfully implemented the flexible schedule in their libraries. The interviews were conducted with the Media Specialist, the Principal, and 3 teachers from each school.

The principals felt that teachers and librarians are able to collaborate better and support the curriculum with a flexible schedule. Some concerns were about all teachers getting the equal support. Some teachers do not take advantage of the support from the Media Specialist when it

is a flexible schedule. Of the 14 teachers that were interviewed, almost all of them had a positive outlook on flexible scheduling. Teachers felt that while it might not be the best for the teachers because they aren't getting their planning time, it is actually better for the students and that is what should really matter. The school librarians felt like they had to show the teachers and other staff why flexible scheduling is better and once they are able to do that then everyone will be on board. One librarian stated that you have to convince the teachers that it is better to stay in the library with you and collaborate than to leave her students and plan alone.

My plan is to facilitate flexible scheduling during the times I don't have scheduled classes so the teachers can have a planning period. I will spend my extra time or my planning time to schedule as needed collaboration lessons with a couple teachers that I know would be as excited to try it as I am. I think starting slow with a few teachers will be the best way to begin. Then others will see and hear about what amazing things we accomplished and want to do the same thing.

I will have to purposefully share with the other teachers and my principal of the extra "flexible" classes that are happening in the media center. I will do this by sending out a newsletter with photos and details about the projects we completed as a collaborative teacher/media specialist team.

I am excited to start this research at my elementary school where I currently work as the media specialist. I think comparing the students' tests cores at the end of the school year with the classes who their teacher did not collaborate with me in the media center would be a good way to see somewhat of a scientific result of the impact of having flexible scheduling in the media center. Also, using the data from our online research format, Destiny, I can see the statistics for usage based on the classes as well as student book checkout.

## **References**

American Association of School Librarians. (2009). Empowering learners: Guidelines for school library media programs. Chicago: Author.

American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology. (1998). Information power: Guidelines for school library media programs. Chicago. American Library Association, and Washington, DC: Association for Educational Communications and Technology

Van Deusen, J. D. (1996). *School Library Media Quarterly*, 24(2), 85–92.

Van Deusen, J. D., & Tallman, J. (1994). *School Library Media Quarterly*, 23(1), 7–25.