

# MAKING THE TRANSITION TO A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER<sub>[flex2]</sub>

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Flexible access is not a new idea. Articles on the subject were written as far back as the 1950's. Despite this fact, few school libraries embraced the concept. In 1988 **Information Power** advocated the use of flexible scheduling. This caused interest in the subject to be renewed, and new research initiated.

Flexible scheduling involves the teacher and media specialist working together to integrate information skills and literature into the curriculum. Teachers schedule time in the library as needed to complement what is going on in the classroom. Students are encouraged to use the library on an individual basis when they have a need for information.

The advantages of using a flexible schedule versus a rigid, fixed schedule are numerous. Skills are not taught in isolation, but as part of the classroom curriculum. Students are therefore more likely to see information skills as meaningful and necessary in meeting their educational goals. By allowing open access, teachers and media specialists are able to capture the "teachable moment."<sup>1</sup> Students are able to begin exploration of subjects when they are excited and engaged. Freedom from a fixed schedule also allows the media specialist more time to provide individual attention to students and teachers.

The use of a flexible schedule has been shown to cause an increase in library circulation, and to improve attitudes about the library. The greater involvement in instructional design and implementation by media specialists increases their familiarity with the curriculum, and, as a result, could improve the quality of their collection development efforts.

Along with the positive aspects of an open schedule, there are some issues which can be seen as problems or obstacles which have hindered its acceptance. One of the most prevalent problems is that many schools use weekly scheduled library visits as teacher planning time. Teachers and administrators are often concerned that if a flexible schedule is used, the planning time must be lost, or made up elsewhere in their weekly schedule. Another issue is that of collaboration. Flexible scheduling calls for the integration of information skills and literature into the curriculum. This means that team planning must take place between the media specialist and the classroom teacher. This may be viewed as a problem for those who are used to working in isolation. Lack of time to conduct these planning sessions may also pose a problem.

The transition from a fixed to a flexible schedule requires reassessment and, possibly, restructuring of the school library. In order to keep up with managerial tasks, more staff may be needed or more volunteers recruited. This will then free the library media specialist to expand his or her teaching and consulting roles. The facility itself may need to be redesigned in order to accommodate a variety of groups and individuals working in the library simultaneously.

Several techniques can be employed to overcome the obstacles associated with changing to a flexible schedule. Strong administrative support is crucial. Media specialists must start slowly by convincing a few selected teachers at a time. When success is demonstrated with a few units, the more skeptical teachers may be convinced to take part. Media specialists should educate faculty and administration with a thorough orientation and periodic inservices. Becoming part of a support group made up of other media specialists who have successfully made the transition could also be helpful.

This is a brief overview of flexible scheduling, its advantages, problems, and a few suggested change strategies. The sources mentioned in the bibliography which follows are full of valuable ideas for making the transition to a flexible schedule as easy as possible.

#### References

<sup>1</sup> Mary Lankford, "Flexible Access: Foundation for Student Achievement," **School Library Journal** 40 (August 1994):21.

#### Transition Strategies/General Information

American Association of School Librarians. "Position Statement on Flexible Scheduling Adopted by the American Association of School Librarians." **School Library Journal** 38 (August 1991):28.

This statement asserts that the school library media program must be fully integrated into the curriculum. According to the AASL, this approach will strengthen students' ability to analyze, evaluate, interpret and communicate information and ideas. The library media center should be open for use throughout the day. Teachers and library media specialists must plan the curriculum as a team in order for the integrated school library program to be successful. The position statement submits that the responsibility for implementation of flexible scheduling be shared by the board of education, district administrator, principals, teachers, and library media specialists. All of these groups must collaborate their efforts and be committed to the concept for it to be successful.

Barron, Daniel and Timothy J. Bergen, Jr. "Information Power: The Restructured School Library for the Nineties." **Phi Delta Kappan** 73 (March 1992):521-525.

The need for change, the benefits of change, and the problems associated with restructuring public school programs are discussed in this article. The authors describe the main benefits derived from integration of information skills into the curriculum as preparing students to live in an information society, and teaching them to become critical thinkers and life long learners. The article includes a history of school libraries showing a shift in emphasis throughout the years. The need for change from rigid to flexible scheduling in the process of restructuring is discussed. The authors contend that flexible access will facilitate better use of the library and its staff, making the media center an improved resource with greater relevance to the school and improved service.

Barron, Daniel D. "Institutionalizing School Library Media Programs and Specialists." *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 6 (February 1990):48-49.

Beginning with a brief history of the development of school library media programs, Barron discusses the impact the publication of *Information Power* has had in enhancing school library media systems. Despite the availability of new guidelines for all school libraries, the author recognizes that there are discrepancies among programs. Barron provides a list of suggestions to administration for implementing flexible scheduling. He stresses that administration should use *Information Power* as a guide. Evaluation and modification of individual programs and examination of current research is encouraged in order to ensure continued growth

Barron, Daniel D. "Let's Tell Them! Together! Individual and Association Activity for Change." **School Library Media Activities Monthly** 9 (April 1993):49-50.

Although there may be evidence that certain changes need to be made in school library media centers, often these changes never materialize. Barron cites Ken Haycock who writes that flexible scheduling has been shown to encourage student achievement, the collaboration of teacher and library media specialists, and other positive changes. Despite this evidence, many library media centers still have weekly scheduled classes which are used as planning periods by teachers. Barron suggests that the reason for this lack of movement is that library media specialists have not taken the responsibility to become leaders in education. In order to ensure a positive future for the school library media center, library media specialists must become actively involved in the educational process at building, district, and state levels.

Browne, Karen Stevens "Making the Move to Flexible Scheduling-Six Stepping Stones." **School Library Media Activities Monthly** 8 (September 1991):28-29.

Browne outlines six "stepping stones" intended to help library media specialists make the transition to a flexible schedule in the school library media program. Library media specialists should: 1)alter current lesson plans so that information skills blend directly into what is being taught in the classroom, 2)become knowledgeable about the curriculum to help make collaboration efforts with teachers more productive, 3)support administration and staff in pushing for change in the school, 4)start small--win over one teacher or grade level at a time--and build, 5)keep everything related to the school media program flexible, and 6)be prepared to experience a change in their position on the faculty to one of greater involvement. Browne concludes by pointing out that this change will be gradual, with many adjustments made along the way.

Browne, Karen S. and Linda Burton. "Timing is Everything: Adapting to the Flexible Schedule." **School Library Journal** 35 (December 1989): 20-23.

An explanation of flexible scheduling, how it works and its potential benefits. Several factors which should be considered before making the transition to a flexible schedule are listed. For example, the current program should be examined, as well as how teachers' planning periods will be covered. The authors stress the need for strong administrative support, and suggest enlisting the help of other media specialists who have made the transition. Communication is important in overcoming faculty opposition. They advise meeting with teachers individually or in small groups when discussing the change. Library media specialists and faculty should be prepared to increase the amount of time allotted for planning. The program should be evaluated periodically, and successes celebrated.

Browning, Elizabeth. "Flexible Scheduling "CLICS" in the School Library Media Center." **School Library Media Activities Monthly** 7 (November 1990):28-29.

Discusses **Information Power's** impact on library media services at Henrico County Public Schools. She contends that the three roles of the library media specialist put forth in Information Power cannot be successfully executed without a flexible schedule. The article outlines Browning's efforts to change her library media center's schedule from fixed to flexible. A pilot program called the "CLIC" group, (Connecting the Library with Instruction in the Classroom), was instituted. Teachers likely to be supportive were chosen to participate. Principals were educated on the subject using information gathered from a review of the literature. Periodic meetings were held to discuss problems and successes. Despite some problems, many positive changes occurred as a result of the CLIC program, most notably, an increase in student's knowledge of information skills.

Buchanan, Jan. **Flexible Access Media Programs**. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1991. 171p. \$24.50. LC Z675.S3B77. ISN 0-87287-834-1.

Defines flexible access library media programs, and explains how they differ from programs with rigid scheduling. The author outlines the necessary steps to take when making a transition to a flexible schedule, and lists attributes the library media specialist must possess in order to ensure the success of such a program. Buchanan also gives detailed information on who to contact for support and ideas in order to successfully present the concept to others. Sample surveys, interviews, and questionnaires needed to develop transition data are included. Suggestions are given for ways to address the concerns of administration and staff. Methods for preparing goals, objectives, facilities, resources, personnel and instruction are included. The author also provides sample schedules, design checklists, professional activities and a list of related readings.

Bucko, Susan. "Flexible Scheduling." **Indiana Media Journal** 13 (Winter 1991):27-28.

Defines rigid and flexible scheduling. Some key benefits of using a flexible schedule are outlined, as well as some common obstacles to its implementation. The author feels that the biggest obstacle to converting to a flexible schedule is the negative attitude of classroom teachers. To combat this and other problems, Bucko suggests 1)gaining administrative support, 2)establishing strong lines of communication, 3)setting a successful example, 4)becoming part of curriculum planning, 5)and patience.

Daly, Jean. "Public and Private Lives." **School Library Journal** 38 (September 1992):146-148.

The author set a goal to switch from a traditional fixed schedule to a flexible schedule. This schedule change was aimed at allowing students to use the library as needed in order to fulfill their educational goals. After only one year, the transition was made with very positive results. The author found that information skills and classroom curriculum became integrated, information skills were taught only at the appropriate point in each classroom assignment, and students, staff and parents expressed renewed excitement in the learning process. The article outlines a lesson plan which successfully integrated information skills.

Dietz, Mary L. "On the Road to Change." **Instructor** 99 (April 1990):35-37.

Although this article does not speak directly to flexible scheduling, it does provide the reader with valuable strategies which can be used to initiate this, or any other, change in a school setting. Dietz identifies a series of obstacles which must be overcome in order for change to occur. According to the author, change

agents must be able to look at the big picture. Educators work as a team to help the change process move forward. Resistance to change should be controlled through education. Dietz points out that coalition building should begin with those colleagues who are most committed to change. Power must be shared in order to meet goals. The final obstacle mentioned is lack of focus in meetings. The purpose, goals, and agenda of meetings should be thought out in advance and be understood by all.

Dobrot, Nancy L. and Rosemary McCawley. **Beyond Flexible Scheduling: A Workshop Guide**. Englewood, CO. Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1992. 71p. \$20.00. LC Z675.S3D65. ISBN 0-931510-44-9.

Provides suggestions and sample units for curriculum integration and staff development during the transition to flexible scheduling. The authors give examples of curriculum integration, and offer arguments to support the need for information skills to be taught in conjunction with classroom instruction. The first part of the workshop guide provides a philosophy model and guidelines for integration of a unit into the curriculum. Dobrot and McCawley also provide step by step instructions to help users conduct their own workshop on the subject. The authors advocate the full acceptance and implementation of flexible scheduling, and the discarding of any fixed weekly classroom visits. They contend that a combination of the two does not work.

"Focus on Flexible Scheduling." **School Library Media Quarterly** 19 (Fall 1990):Centerfold.

Provides a concise overview of what flexible scheduling is, how it works, and ways it may be implemented. Flexible scheduling is defined as "the use of the library media center at point of need." It requires cooperative planning by the media specialist and classroom teacher. Information skills are taught in relation to the classroom curriculum. The article lists the benefits of flexible scheduling to the student, media specialist teacher, and administrator. Several key points are mentioned such as commitment to the concept by school personnel, and the need for thorough analysis of the current system. Media specialists should first illicit the support of the building principal. Teachers should be provided with workshops and materials which will help win them over to the concept. The program should be evaluated to ensure that student outcomes are being met.

Houff, Suzanne G. "Flexibility is the Key." **School Library Media Activities Monthly** 7 (November 1990):27.

Houff recounts the steps she implemented in moving to a flexible schedule in the library media center. Flexible scheduling became necessary when the school population increased and the curriculum incorporated whole language. The author lists the benefits of flexible scheduling such as the ability for students and teachers to use the library media center whenever they have need of information

or materials, and the increased time available for teacher/media specialist collaboration.

Houff feels that the library media center should be at the center of the learning program and that flexible scheduling can ensure this. A successful program using this scheduling method takes organization, the ability of the library media specialist to present new concepts to other teachers, and proper staffing of the library media center.

Jay, M. Ellen and Hilda L. Jay "The Principal and the Library Media Program." **School Library Media Activities Monthly** 6 (April 1990):30-32.

Successful change in a school library media program is dependant upon full administrative support. Principals need to be aware of what the library media specialist does, and the library media specialist's importance to the school's mission. "Flexible scheduling is probably the most important factor influencing the integration of the library media program into ongoing classroom activities" (p. 31). Today's library media specialist must be creative, willing to work cooperatively, have a clear understanding of instructional design and be familiar with the curriculum. Principals wanting to revamp faltering library media programs may want to hire consultants and review existing literature.

Krieser, Latane C, and John Horten. "The History of the Curriculum Integrated Library Media Program Concept." **International Journal of Instructional Media** 19 (1992):313-319.

The concept of flexible access was the intention when school libraries were first developed. Since flexible scheduling has been rediscovered, the role of school librarians has been expanded into information specialists, production specialists, and teachers. The implementation of Information Power has demonstrated the need for flexible scheduling, and assisted in redefining the concept. Krieser and Horten explain their belief that an integrated curriculum with a flexible schedule is essential to a library media program that will satisfy the needs of contemporary and future schools. They emphasize that the transition from rigid to flexible scheduling must be utilized in order to allow integration of the curriculum with the school library media center.

Krimmelbein, Cindy Jeffrey. **The Choice to Change: Establishing an Integrated School Library Media Program**. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1989. 227p. \$24.50. LC Z675.S3K86 1989. ISN 0-87287-588-1.

In order for change to be effective, it must be planned carefully and systematically. Krimmelbein stresses the need for administrative support in order for the change process to succeed. Four models which present different views on how the library media program can be integrated into the curriculum are presented. These models can provide a needed framework for the change. A

valuable tool for those making the switch from a fixed to a flexible schedule, or any change, in their library media program.

Lankford, Mary D. "Flexible Access: Foundation for Student Achievement." **School Library Journal** 40 (August 1994):21-28.

Lankford discusses the need for flexible access to school libraries in order to enhance learning and use of staff, facilities, and resources. The author proposes that problems with flexible access can be avoided if the idea is promoted to the staff properly. Librarians implementing a flexible schedule should be supported with clerical assistance, full automation, and well designed libraries. Lankford explains the process used within her school for promoting and implementing a program of flexible scheduling through workshops, summer committee meetings, and staff development. The article includes the author's observation of the lessons learned by staff in her school during the first year of implementation. A list of relevant references is given.

**LM\_NET Archives.** "Flexible Scheduling." (July 1993-January 1995).

By conducting a search of the LM\_NET Archives using the term "flexible scheduling," many valuable discussions/comments were found. These discussions consisted of library media specialists trying to make a change to a flexible schedule. They were asking those who had successfully made the change for advice and resource recommendations. Many useful suggestions were given, which are consistent with the literature on the subject.

McCain, Mary Maude. "Teaming is Learning." **School Library Media Activities Monthly** 5 (May 1989):32-34, 43.

Tarrant Elementary School has made their library media center the focal point for learning. Part of this success is due to a switch to flexible scheduling. This allowed for integration of information skills activities into the curriculum. McCain offers seven factors which she feels can help determine whether or not a flexible schedule will be successful: 1) a committed library media specialist who believes in the concept and is willing to help convince others of its importance, 2) support of administration and teachers, 3) a library media committee which could give support and advice, 4) a strong management system to ensure that students use the library even though there are no scheduled classes, 5) a well-designed facility which allows for easy and comfortable access and a good selection of resources, 6) collaborative instructional units and 7) sufficient staff and volunteer help.

Ohlrich, Karen Browne. "Flexible Scheduling: the Dream vs. Reality." **School Library Journal** 38 (May 1992):35-38.



This article was written as a follow-up to Ohlrich and Burton's 1989 piece "Timing is Everything-Adapting to the Flexible Schedule" which related the early stages of the transition process from a rigid to a flexible schedule. Ohlrich shares the positive results of that switch, one of the most important being that students were retaining and using information skills to a greater degree when these skills were incorporated as part of classroom assignments. Other benefits mentioned were increased interaction with staff, an increase in library circulation and use, and a more complete awareness of collection needs in relation to the curriculum. Ohlrich shares many interesting experiences and words of wisdom. In the last part of the article, the author discusses moving to a new school and starting the change process all over again.

Smith, Jane Bandy. "The Supportive Principals' ABC's." **School Library Journal** 36 (April 1990):19.

Lists from A to Z some things that principals should do in order to provide the library media center with the support it needs in order to be successful. Of special interest is the letter "S" which states that a supportive principal is an advocate of flexible scheduling in the school library media center. The other twenty-five points are also important to the successful running of the school media center. As much of the literature indicates, administrative backing is essential in order to make a change to an open schedule, or any major change, successful.

### Research/Evidence to Support Change

Carlisle, Millie. "Indiana School Librarians: Flexible Scheduling and Information Power." **Indiana Media Journal** 13 (Summer 1991):27-28.

Summarizes the results of a December 1989 survey conducted by the AIME Elementary Media Committee. Results revealed that 56% of the total media specialists surveyed had regularly scheduled classes, and only 25% used flexible scheduling. School librarians were asked to answer a few open-ended questions. One question asked for librarians to share positive and negative scheduling experiences which might be of interest to others in the field. Negative comments included "my time with students is prep time for their teachers; I wish there was a way to enlighten them through state guidelines and other information," and "having classes all day, there is not time for an open library for student research or recreational reading-the library work suffers." (p. 27) Other more positive comments were made by those who had successfully implemented a flexible schedule.

Donham Van Deusen, Jean "The Effects of Fixed Versus Flexible Scheduling on Curriculum Involvement and Skills Integration in Elementary School Media Programs." **School Library Media Quarterly** 21 (Spring 1992):173-180.

This study explores the effects of fixed versus flexible schedules on the curricular involvement of the library media specialist, and the integration of library skills into the curriculum. The study revealed that library media specialists working with a flexible schedule are more likely to be involved with the school's curriculum. Flexible scheduling in combination with team teaching/planning showed higher mean scores than other combinations. Scheduling by itself showed no significant relationship to the integration of information skills. The researcher recommends that team planning be implemented as well as flexible scheduling if library media specialists curricular involvement is the goal. Suggestions for further study are included.

Donham Van Deusen, Jean and Julie I. Tallman, "The Impact of Scheduling on Curriculum Consultation and Information Skills Instruction-Part One-The 1993-94 AASL/Highsmith Research Award Study." **School Library Media Quarterly** 23 (Fall 1994):17-24.

The first of a three part study focusing on the effects of different methods of scheduling and planning on the consulting and teaching roles of the library media specialist. This study concentrates on the relationship between scheduling and planning styles. The results of the study indicate that schools using flexible scheduling showed more involvement in curriculum consultation and an increased involvement by the media specialist in student assessment. The research highlights the importance of library media specialists and teachers planning together in order to achieve the best curriculum integration. Principals' expectations were also found to be important for implementing curriculum integrated library media programs.

Haycock, Ken. "What Works: Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching with Flexible Scheduling--Revisited." **Emergency Librarian** 20 (May-June 1993):33.

Haycock recaps the "Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching with Flexible Scheduling" section of his 1992 book *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning Through the School's Library Resource Center*. He briefly summarizes findings of doctoral dissertations which deal with cooperative planning and flexible scheduling. Studies have shown that students' information skills are enhanced by the use of integrated classroom instruction, cooperative planning, and team teaching in a flexibly scheduled media center. It was also found that students' attitudes toward the media center seemed to be more positive in flexible programs, as were their feelings about reading.

Mills, Mary Louise. "Cooperative Program Planning and the Flexible Schedule: What do Principals Really Think?" **Emergency Librarian** 19 (September/October 1991):25-28.

To successfully implement cooperative program planning, the traditional scheduling method must be replaced by a flexible program. To meet the needs of learners, the media center must be made available to individuals, small groups, and classes when the need arises. The author provides an informative history of flexible scheduling and cooperative programming. The focus of the article is Mill's study of 37 principals in the Halifax School District. Mills believes that the principal is the key to any major change in the school program. Principals were interviewed to ascertain their views on cooperative planning, problems in adjusting to a flexible schedule, and the type of staff they felt would best respond to these changes.

Townsend, Catherine M. "Public School Library Media Centers in South Carolina: A Survey of Service Levels Offered." ERIC Document 331 505. (April 1990).

After the publication of **Information Power**, South Carolina conducted a study to determine the state of their library media programs before implementing the Information Power guidelines. One question asked in a survey which was part of this study is of special interest--"does flexible scheduling have an effect on service levels?" Data gathered indicated that "the presence or absence of flexible scheduling is the most significant in determining the levels of service that can be performed by those media centers" (p. 8). Schools with flexible schedules had higher levels of pro-active service than those without. Another compelling piece of evidence to support a move to a flexible schedule.