Module 7: Administering the School Library Curriculum-Related Program

The library that I observed operates under a flexible schedule using a weekly sign-up schedule with the week, day, and period. The librarian prefers this schedule since it offers flexibility for teachers and students.

The advantage of this flexible schedule is that it allows the learning community "continuous access to the library media center and provides more opportunity for integration of information literacy into the classroom curricula"(Fox 10). It allows for spontaneous changes, rather than creating a rigid, set schedule that is difficult to adapt as needed. Rather than creating a schedule that blocks off library access in terms of time, it allows for media access in terms of need (Fox 10).

One of the disadvantages to a flexible schedule is that the librarian doesn't get to see every student, so media education is selective, based on classroom teacher preference. As Woolls suggests, "[m]any school library media specialists will argue that, unless . . . teachers are scheduled to bring their classes to the media center, they will not do so" (107). If a teacher prefers to stay in the classroom all year rather than come to the library, students miss out on important information literacy skills. Therefore, media education isn't equal for all, but selective. This is a disadvantage, especially when schools have a standardized curriculum in order to meet their goals in high-stakes testing scores. It's more difficult to ensure that vital curricular goals are being taught and measured if the media specialist is only teaching to some, rather than all, students (Johnson 39). To those who believe that a media center with a fixed schedule is too rigid, Wools suggests that the SLMS plan activities that offer flexibility. This "take[s] the endorsement of the advisory committee and detailed, careful, curriculum-related planning with one or more teachers" (107). Indeed, it is advantageous for the SLMS to "work with the village" rather than working alone.

Another disadvantage to flexible scheduling is that it doesn't always encourage independent reading. With a fixed schedule, students have a set time for book check out and check in and regular visits to the library are incorporated into the school day. This encourages lifelong reading and learning. One of the principles of Teaching and Learning in *Information Power* is that "The library media program encourages and engages students in reading, viewing, and listening for understanding and enjoyment" (66). A fixed schedule allows time for all students in the learning community to browse the collections. It allows for the fulfillment and pleasure that comes from using the various forms of informational and recreational forms of media.

In addition, "mini-lessons" can be built into the fixed schedule, helping to support real-life, authentic learning and guaranteeing regular teacher prep time (Johnson 39). These are all important considerations in deciding whether to used fixed or flexible scheduling.

My SLMS uses a flexible schedule, recording class times in a lesson plan book. Unfortunately, she uses a hard copy, not a digital copy, and teachers must come in to the library to view the schedule. If it were to be misplaced, it would be difficult and time-consuming to reconstruct the schedule. Since this school has such a large campus, the ability to access the schedule from classroom computers would benefit teachers. At a previous school, I implemented an online version of the computer labs and library schedule. Saved as a "read only" copy, requests were sent to the librarian/ tech coordinator who then entered the scheduled classes. This way, all teachers could view the schedules from their school computers, which then served as an excellent resource for sharing library use data with the administrator.

During the beginning-of-the-year introductory lessons, which include library orientation, media literacy lessons, and informational literacy workshops, the librarian prepares PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and media clips. Also, all computers must be ready to be accessed by students so that they can navigate through the catalog and electronic databases. In addition, she needs to troubleshoot to make sure that all program application plug-ins are installed before students arrive.

Other students are allowed to be in the library while class is being conducted because the library is divided into three distinct sections: the computer lab, the learning/classroom area, and the study area. When library classes are in session, students from other classes may quietly work in the study area.

At the beginning of the year, the SLMS focuses all her lessons on information retrieval and information literacy. She teaches, primarily, research skills. Indeed, this lines up with the *PA Guidelines* which suggest that the SLMS will "[i]ntegrate research, reference, and information literacy skills into subject areas" (13).
At a previous school, the school librarian modeled how to use the electronic databases and find credible sources. She also introduced a fantastic resource called Noodle Tools which the students preferred over compared to Citation Machine.

My cooperating SLMS would like to do more collaborative work with teachers in information literacy. The reality is, however, that although she teaches individual units on information literacy to classes (with the hope that what she teaches gets integrated within curricular units), there's not much collaboration or discussion between her and the teachers. Since *Information Power* lists as one of the Learning and Teaching principles that the

library media program is essential to learning and teaching and must be fully integrated into the curriculum to promote students' achievement of learning goals (60),

she would like to focus more merging information skills into the curriculum. This lines up with the specific goal within Information Power of "collabor[ating] regularly with teachers and other members of the learning community to encourage students to become information literate, independent in their learning, and socially responsible in their use of information and information technology" (63).

One weakness at the school where my SLMS works is the lack of available data to evaluate whether or not students are learning the information literacy skills that they need as life-long learners. This requires direction from educational leaders and a standardized curriculum which isn't presently available. It's important to note that standards and benchmarks in media literacy in the state of New Mexico do not yet exist. As a matter of fact, some of curriculum I've created at Taos Academy has been sent to the State for review for possible incorporation into future standards and benchmarks. In brief, it's hard to measure media literacy skills when statewide standards and benchmarks haven't yet been created. Although they are theoretically embedded into the curriculum, I like of developing specific standards and benchmarks for media and informational literacy based on a combination of the AASL's Standards for the 21st Century Learner and ISTE (International Society on Technology in Education) National Educational Technology Standards (NETS•S) and Performance Indicators for Students.

Another suggestion I would make would be to use the resources within *Power Tools* to make connections with teachers. Pages 1-11 to 1-13d offer specific templates all librarians could modify to collaborate. Distributing the "Dear Language Arts Teacher" handout at the beginning of the year is a great way to show English teachers ways to connect with the library, and having teachers fill out the "How We Can Help" form will show specific curricular connections that can be made in developing information literacy.

A strong relationship exists between the librarian and students at the school I observed. One of the observations I made was that the warm, welcoming rapport that my SLMS had with students made the library a pleasant places to be. Students seem to regard the library as a sanctuary. According to my cooperating SLMS, the SLMS/teacher relationship varies with each teacher. Some teachers are active participants in library life while others never step foot in the library. What stood out to me was that the friendly, open, and positive personality of my SLMS helped promote a warm atmosphere for research and study. Although the relationship that my SLMS has with the current principal and superintendent is cordial, she shared with me that he has so many other "things on his plate" that it is rare that she sits down and talks with him.

Although my cooperating SLMS has attended curriculum meetings in the past, she currently does not attend them. At a previous school, the librarian was an active participant on our curriculum committees, including the WASC (Western Association of School and Colleges) accreditation and curriculum task force and the International Baccalaureate Advisory Committee. I appreciated the insight and perspective that the librarian offered in portraying an overview of curriculum, drawing connections between departments, and offering suggestions for collaborative lesson planning.

The decisions that the SLMS makes in administering the library deeply affect the learning community. Overall, collaboration, communication, and careful planning are keys to being successful in managing a library.