Roles of the librarian and library media center in the improvement of student Learning

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to prove that the librarian and library media center have an important role in the improvement of student learning. Many researches in this field have established the positive role of library and media center in students' educational achievements. I have made a comparison between fixed scheduling and flexible scheduling and finally determined how they can affect the improvement of student's achievement.

"...The library is the heart of the educational process; if students are to have the free access they need resources, the schools cannot have classes rigidly scheduled in the library..."
Cooperman, NJ Commissioner of Education, 1987.

INTRODUCTION

Students today are faced with a flood of information resources and the challenge of using them effectively and responsibly. School library media centers in the 21st century can, and should be centers to increas student achievement and positive focused on school reform. Student achievement involves skill development, knowledge acquisition, research analysis of ideas, integration of concepts and resources. These windows to the world serve as points for our continual drive for rigorous research work and increased achievement for each student.

Dr. Kathleen D. Smith, a large urban / suburban high school's principal in Denver, Colorado said " a quick profile of student achievement at Cherry Creek high school in Denver, "Colorado for the past 10 years reveals this data:

"This school of 3500 students has increased graduation rate by 5% to 96% of students, decreased the drop-out rate to 8%, 90% of the graduates attend college, and in the past 10 years of National Merit finalists have increased in number from 8 to 32 with Hispanic scholars and African-American scholars also represented. There has been a 400% increase in AP tests administrated from 381 to this year's number of 1,565.Next year there should be over 2,000.At the same time scores have increased from 81% receiving a 3 or higher on the AP test to over 93% receiving a 3

or higher. This school is a comprehensive one, offering 25 sports, over 90 clubs and myriad of volunteer opportunities."

Some educational planners believe that one of the most effective and efficient ways to increase student achievement and love of learning is to leverage the power library media centers can have in this process with increasing issues and demands.

The aim of this research is to identify and describe the functions and roles of the librarian and library media center as integral components of student learning improvement.

Anderson (1999) focused on the roles of school media specialists, combining the familiar information access, teaching and program administration roles with the visionary collaboration, leadership and technology roles.

Dunham (1999) also listed three components for information power. They are teaching and learning, information access and delivery, and program administration. Collaboration of the classroom teacher, technology specialists, and the library media specialists is essential to connect curriculum to technology. Dunham concludes the it is important that the teacher-librarian needs to be a part of collaboration.

Hamilton-pannell (2000) investigated the relationship between school library media programs and scores on standardized achievement test in Alaska, Pennsylvania, and Colorado.

Results revealed that a school library media program, with full-time library media specialists, supporting staff, and a strong computer network leads to higher student achievement, regardless of social and economic factors in a community. Some suggestions are provided for sharing this information with decision makers and others.

Manzo (2000) studied on the library service center of Colorado State library revealed that students in schools with appropriate and sufficient library collections, and qualified library personnel tend to perform better on standardized tests. This study recommended that student achievement could be raised by making the school library an integral learning center, encouraging teachers and librarians to collaborate on lesson plans and classroom assignments.

Essential elements of the power

The essential power elements in the library media center may be mentioned as follows:

1.Access: The library media center should serve as physical and philosophical center of school. Focus on knowledge acquisition should be represented with information at the core and access for all students at all times. Library hours should be extended to afford students who are busy during the day opportunities to access services after school. Library should never be closed during the day for meetings or parties or other administrative types of functions. They should be available, warm and welcoming places

2.Data driven: Library media centers must use data to assist with making decisions about resources whether they involve personnel or materials. Services and materials should reflect the learning community's needs and instructional priorities of the school. Librarians know what materials and sources are used by which students and for what purpose.

3.Integration of technology: Technology is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is marvelous, expediency, and efficiency, but it must be integrated through strategic

planning within the instructional program. Parameters must be established for use and teachers must be trained.

4.*Connection between teaching and learning:* Teaching and learning process must be emphasized through the model of a teaching library. Librarians must be viewed and behave as a teacher- of teachers, students and community. They must serve as leaders to form instructional teams and promote professional growth.

5.*Advocacy:* A commitment to information literacy must permeate the culture of school. Expectations of school are addressed by administrators and librarians who then introduce students to all of the services available through the library media center.

Student Achievement

Improving student achievement is a vital principal interest, but many overlook libraries and librarians are potentially powerful instruments in that regard, because they have not been educated to the library's value; and library media research rarely appears in administrators' publications. (Wilson & Lance, 1993)

The evidence is drawn from elementary, middle and high school studies reaching back to the 1950s. Most effectively illustrated in recent work by Lance and his associates in Colorado (Lance, 2001) and by Smith (2001) in Texas, The research identifies statistically significant positive correlations between (a) student achievement levels on various types of standardized measures and (b) library media services and school librarians displaying characteristics of media services program. Findings of the "Colorado school study" (Curry, 2001) showed a positive correlation between library expenditures and student achievement. It also showed a

link between media specialist involvement and study learning.

Characteristic of media services program

Dr. Kathleen D. Smith believes that the goals of each school for library media program should be as follow. "Each graduate is a young independent thinker who is capable of academically competing with his or her worldwide counterparts and is a person who knows how to give back to the community." Some characteristics may be mentioned as follow:

1.Large, varied and up to date collections.

2.One or more full-time qualified librarians.

3.Library support staff large and skilled enough to free librarians from routine duties and jobs to allow them to teach, to collaborate with teachers and ...

4.Free students and teachers access to the library during and beyond school hours.

5.Networked computers providing students and teachers access to catalogs, databases, and internet and so on.

6. Adequate budget to support programs.

7.Information literacy instruction integrated into the curriculum.

8.Librarians collaboration with teachers.

9. One great barrier to full library utilization is a lack of teacher awareness of what the librarians have to offer. Exposure to and experience effective working with school librarians is the first step to correct the deficiency.

Role of principals in supporting libraries

"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge; where is the knowledge we have lost in information"

T.S. Eliot, the Rock

Principals determine school library media program quality as librarians do

(Haycock, 2000, Oberg, 1999; Oberg, Hay & Henri, 2000) because they influence or control each of the nine factors listed above. Collection size, currency, service hours, staff size, and the employment of full time qualified librarians and adequate support staff all are tied to the principal's budgeting decisions. Equally important is the principal's role in creating a school environment where student use and teacher/librarian interaction are valued and promoted (Wilson, 2001).

How students use the library is followed how principals can play their roles effectively. In every school principal is the key for the implementation by doing follows:

-Educate themselves to library and librarian potential.

-Reconfigure the librarian's job to maximize relation of that potential.

-Hire high-quality, forward-looking, energetic, innovative librarians.

-Providing budget resources adequate to new roles and demands.

-Effectively and accurately evaluate both the program and the librarian.

-Require teachers and the library media specialist to plan together.

Fixed and flexible scheduling and the school library media center

Flexible scheduling involves the school library media specialists and the classroom teachers' collaborating on scheduling class in the school library media center to meet needs generated by teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

Fixed scheduling, the opposite of flexible scheduling, involves student's attending a regularly scheduled class in the school library media center, often on a weekly basis.

Although fixed scheduling assures that classes have regular access and instruction, it does not seem to enhance the connection between learning in the classroom and instruction skills in the school library media. Student assessment also occurs more regularly in schools with flexible scheduling and a positive planning culture. In addition, the enhanced communication between teachers and school library media specialists increases the involvement of the school library media specialist in student assessment, producing more specific feedback on the effectiveness of the school library media program. For instance:

Tallman and Van Deusen (1993) found that flexible scheduling related positively to the occurrence of instructional consultation. In one study it was found that the teacher-librarian is most likely to be involved in the curriculum has a flexible or mixed schedule in which team planning occurs. With this scheduling, information skills were integrated more often. In 1994 they found that more consultation occurred between teachers and teacher-librarians in school with flexible scheduling or mixed scheduling. Where, there was either flexible or mixed scheduling combined with a collaborative planning culture, teacher-librarians reported more instances of gathering materials, identifying objectives, planning teaching and learning activities, tracking the collection, and evaluating the collection.

Van Deusen (1996) found that flexible or mixed scheduling in elementary schools had a positive relationship to individual assistance to students, provision of electronic support for teachers, and consultation work performed for teachers.

The media specialist role was found to be altered significantly by the flexible

schedule. No longer provided with a weekly schedule to follow, the flexible schedule is directed entirely by the media specialist and teachers. With a flexible schedule, the program dictates the schedule; and with a fixed schedule, the schedule controls the program (Fedora, 1993).

The advantages of using flexible scheduling is numerous, but some of them are listed below:

-Students and teachers use the library media center more often.

-Students make better use of the library media center since they use it only when they need.

-Instruction is improved and research skills are encouraged.

-Students become information independent users of information.

-It integrates the teaching of information skills into the instructional program.

Result

School library media center can play an important role in improving student achievement so it should have basic material to reach this propose. Principals integrated in developing their libraries as instruments of school improvement can ask their librarians to assemble a research collection to share with board members, district administrations, and teachers.

The library media specialist role found to be altered significantly by the flexible schedule. No longer provided with a weekly schedule to follow, the flexible schedule is directed entirely by the media specialists and teachers. It is clear that with a flexible schedule, the program dictates the schedule; but with a fixed schedule, the schedule controls the program.

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تاریخ دریافت:۸۲/۷/۶