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THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST
IN THE EDUCATION OF LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS
IN SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

by
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A Thesis

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of
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at
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Approved by

Assistant Professor

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Abstract

Janet W. Lani. An Inquiry into the Role of the Library Media Specialist in the Education of Learning Disabled Students in Southern New Jersey. 1999. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship).

Inclusion has become a major force in education. Special needs students are being placed into regular education because of legislation such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act '97 (IDEA'97). Unlike previous legislation the federal funding for this act may be used in part for teacher training. This inquiry questioned media specialists in elementary schools in the eight southern New Jersey counties about training they had received in educating learning disabled students and any accommodations they have made in their program to better serve these students. It also compared how library is viewed in each school. Library may be a graded subject or a preparation period for teachers. Media specialists were also asked how they feel about working with learning disabled students. Results of the survey indicate that training is still needed in most school districts so that the districts are in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act '97.

Mini Abstract

Janet W. Lani. *An Inquiry into the Role of the Library Media Specialist in the Education of Learning Disabled Students in Southern New Jersey*. 1999. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett), Program in School and Public Librarianship).

This inquiry looked at training of media specialists in southern New Jersey for working with learning disabled students. It also looked into what accommodations they make in their programs for these students. Results indicate that media specialists would like to have more training to ensure success.

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Chapter 1

The Problem

Introduction and Background

The United States Department of Education statistics show that as of 1995-1996 there were five million students, ranging in age from six to 21, with disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998). They are categorized as having several different disabilities such as: (a) speech or language impaired, (b) mentally retarded, (c) learning disabled, (d) emotionally disturbed, (e) other health impaired, (f) hearing impaired, (g) orthopedically impaired, (h) visually handicapped, (i) multihandicapped, and (j) unspecified (Ornstein & Levine, 1997, p. 370).

The federal government has passed in the last twenty-three years three major laws regarding the education of students with disabilities. The first, in 1975, was the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (Petrie, 1982). Known as PL 94-142, this act provided that all disabled children be educated as much as possible in regular school settings in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Petrie, 1982). Prior to this law a "free and appropriate public education" was not guaranteed to students with disabilities (Petrie, 1982, p.3). In 1990 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed which reinforced the 1975 law and included provisions that: (a) IQ scores must not be the only criterion of evaluation, (b) parents must be informed of the diagnosis and they are permitted to protest the findings, (c) both short and long-range goals must be in the student's individualized education plan (IEP) and (d) the services must be in the least

restrictive environment (Ornstein & Levine. 1997, pp.370-371). The most recent legislation is the Individuals with Disabilities Act '97 ((IDEA '97). This new legislation requires five changes in the way students who have a disability are educated. These changes are: (a) increased expectations for the students, (b) a greater involvement on the part of the parents of these students, (c) making the regular education teacher a part of the planning and assessment for these students, (d) reporting the performance, goals, and assessments for these students in reports to the public, and (e) providing professional development opportunities for all personal involved with the students (General Information, 1998, September 29).

Special education students have been traditionally served in four ways. The first is in a general education classroom setting which is the preferred way, if it is properly done. This method may include a special education teacher or a Chapter I teacher coming into the classroom and team teaching with the regular classroom teacher. This requires a great deal of cooperation between the teachers to plan what each will do. It may also include the services of a consulting teacher who usually only observes the students, prepares their materials, and assists in lesson planning so that individual needs may be accommodated. The consulting teacher meets with the regular classroom teacher, but it is the classroom teacher who has the responsibility for the program. Another way that students with disabilities may be served is by the use of resource rooms. In this setting the students spend part of the day in a general classroom and part of the day in a resource room where they receive individual or small group instruction. The third method is a self-contained classroom in which the student spends most of the day in a self-contained class with other similarly disabled students and is mainstreamed only for

special subjects such as music, art, physical education, or library instruction. The fourth method is to educate the children in a special school. Although these schools are becoming rare, there are still some schools for the hearing or visually impaired or those students who are emotionally disturbed (Wesson & Keefe, 1995). In southern New Jersey there are also special services districts. These schools accommodate those students whose home district can demonstrate that the district can not effectively educate. The students are placed in a special services school, or classroom within another school, if the district does not have their own facility, where they are educated at the expense of the student's home district (Ornstein & Levine, 1997).

Problem

One of the provisions of IDEA '97 allows a portion of the funds once reserved for special needs students to be used for all students. A portion of these funds may be used for training general education teachers (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998). The library media specialist is one of the teachers who should be included in the training programs because students with disabilities are expected to make use of the media center's services. Even if the students attend the media center in a self-contained class, they need to be taught the same skills as the rest of the student population. Students with disabilities also need to be able to relate to as many individuals other than their own teacher, and the media specialist is someone who can help students attain the goals set for them (Wesson & Keefe, 1995). The media specialist needs to be made aware of what can be done to help these students. "School library media specialists play an integral role in helping students to develop to their fullest potential" (Voltz, 1995, p. 149). The inclusion of the media specialist in planning an IEP for a student with disabilities will require training the media specialist

in what goals will be set and what material, methods, and motivations will be used (Wesson & Keefe), 1995). It also will require more effort from both the regular or special education teacher and the media specialist to effectively plan this program.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to learn how school media specialists work with students with disabilities. Because legislation has mandated that students with disabilities be taught as much as possible in a general education setting, schools must make the proper provisions.

The study attempted to learn what randomly selected elementary schools in the eight southern New Jersey counties are doing to uphold this mandate. It looked at how students with disabilities come to the media center and what provisions the media specialist puts in place to assure compliance with this mandate both in assessment and in material selection. Due to the wide range of disabilities that can affect students, this study was limited to the way a media specialist interacts with students who are considered to have a learning disability and excluded those interactions with students who have a visual, auditory, or orthopedic disability. These students' disabilities have an entirely different set of problems which library media specialists need to address. The librarians interactions with students who are emotionally disturbed or who have attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were only considered if the students also have a perceptual, processing, or reading disability.

Theoretical Framework

Library skills have rarely been mentioned in a student's IEP (Wesson & Keefe,

1995). The skills are important and some of these skills can be taught to students with learning disabilities and should be considered for inclusion in the IEP. Part of this thesis included learning how many, if any, library media specialists are trained in incorporating the needed skills into a student's IEP. Most schools offer workshops and in-services to expand the staff's professional growth. School media specialists need the chance to attend workshops and in-services that are geared for those involved in special education. Special education conferences are also a good way for the media specialist to learn more about the field. Many of these conferences emphasize collaboration, which is what the media specialist and classroom teacher, whether special or regular education, will need to do to best serve these students, as well as all students (Wesson, 1995, p. 237-239).

Questions to be answered

This thesis attempted to learn the role that the individual school media specialists play in the education of learning disabled students. It also attempted to discover how students with learning disabilities are viewed by the media specialists and what the various media specialists feel is the most productive way to utilize the media center to benefit learning disabled students without compromising the education of all students.

Definition of Terms

Chapter I. These are programs, such as (a) supplemental math or reading, (b) counseling, or (c) physical or occupational therapy, provided to learning disabled students that are funded by the federal government (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

Elementary School. An educational institution for children in the earliest grades,

generally grades one through six or one through eight; it often includes kindergarten as well (Ornstein & Levine, 1997, p. G-2). For the purpose of this thesis, an elementary school will include grades kindergarten through six or any combination that does not exceed sixth grade.

Inclusion. Placing students with disabilities in the regular education classroom (Ornstein & Levine, 1997).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP). A written plan in which the student's goals, needed services, and the extent of interaction with nondisabled students are projected on an annual basis. It also includes measurable short-term goals (Hueffner, 1997, p. 334).

In-service. Courses or programs designed to provide employees staff growth in job related competencies or skill, usually sponsored by employers at the professional level (Houston, 1995).

Learning disabilities. The term "learning disabilities" means a disorder in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding written or spoken language (Americans with Disabilities Act; Gorman, 1997).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The least restrictive environment places students with disabilities in separate classes only for the time necessary to provide the needed services for the individual child. The student remains in regular classes as much as possible (Ornstein & Levine, 1997).

Mainstreaming. Accommodating students with disabilities into a regular classroom for a major portion of the day (Ornstein & Levine, 1997).

Resource Room. A partial pull-out program for a period of time each day (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

Self-contained. A separate classroom setting, taught by a special education teacher (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

Organization of Study

The rest of this thesis contains an explanation of the literature that was reviewed for the study followed by the methodology that was used to collect relevant data. It then presents an analysis of the data received and a summary of the results. Brief recommendations for further study conclude the thesis.

Chapter 2

The Literature Review

Introduction

For this thesis it was necessary to locate information on the laws that govern students with disabilities and the impact these laws are having on the school library media specialist. It was also necessary to examine what a media specialist is and what role he or she plays in the education of all students.

Information Power assigned a school library media specialist a four-part job description. The media specialist's first role is as a teacher who provides students with the necessary skills and knowledge to access information and then use it. It is important today for all students to know what steps they need to take in order to access information including which references they need to consult and also how they should evaluate the information that they find. Secondly, the school media specialist is a collaborator who works not only in developing the curriculum but also in working on integrating these information skills into the curriculum. The third part of the school media specialist's job description is that of an information specialist who needs to provide information about resources and to assist students in finding the proper resources for what they need. He or she also provides the teachers and administration with the most recent information about technology available to the school staff and students. The final part of the job description is that of an administrator who works with all members of the school community to lead all phases of the media center's activities. This includes, but is not

limited to, staff management and budget planning (AASL, 1998). These job skills hold not only for the general school population but for students with disabilities as well (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

Justification

This topic was chosen for research because with inclusion now being a trend in special education, students with disabilities who have previously attended schools outside their own districts to receive needed services are now being returned to their own district and are being placed in regular education settings. Additionally, students who have traditionally attended library in a self-contained unit are now attending, in many cases, with a regular classroom. Training will be needed to help the media center staff make certain that this transition is effective (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

Learning disabled students' rights to utilize the services of the media center have not always been assured. After the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, in 1975, a school's media center was expected to have a role in the education of students with learning disabilities, but at the same time there was little information that was available to the media specialist to implement this legislation. Individualized instruction for all students also required the media specialist to look at the types of material in the media center and supplement them so that the goals and objectives for all students could be met (Petrie, 1982). Even now, more than twenty years after the passage of this legislation, not all school library media specialists make effective use of all the materials that are available to them, and training is needed for both the media specialist and the general and special education teachers to incorporate these materials into regular use ("What works", 1994, May-June).

Historical Context

Prior to 1975 children who were classified disabled were not guaranteed a public education. It was not until the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, also known as PL 94-142, in 1975 that all disabled children were assured of free, public education "regardless of the nature or severity of their handicap" (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998, p. 78). Today, because of laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), passed in 1970, and the revised law, IDEA '97, inclusion has become an important factor in educating students with disabilities (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

Before the passage of PL-94-142 the state of Wisconsin passed the Exceptional Education Act in 1973. A test case was conducted in the Lapham Elementary School in Madison, Wisconsin on integrating students with disabilities into the regular classrooms, including the school's media center. The media specialist was at the outset uncertain of how well this was going to work but was determined to implement it properly. The implementation was ultimately successful. The media specialist, Eliza T. Dresang, noted "Librarians must not get caught up in dilemmas about whether to extend services to certain children or whether to limit service. It is the absolute right of every child in a school to receive equal consideration" (Dresang, 1977, September, p. 20.).

The Education of All Handicapped Children (PL 94-142) was meant to ensure that children who had not previously been assured of a free, public education were given the opportunity to receive one. IDEA and IDEA '97 further strengthen the need to provide all children with disabilities not only a free, public education but to do it in the least restrictive environment.

Research on the success or failure of inclusion is still difficult to ascertain. In

some classrooms students with learning disabilities take an active part, but in other situations they are likely to be passive observers (Sayre, 1996).

Theoretical Framework

Mainstreaming and inclusion are efforts to accommodate students with disabilities into the regular education setting for as much of the school day as possible. They are not meant to eliminate the existence of special education classrooms or services that are needed for children with needs that cannot be met in the regular classroom. At the least, these students are to be included in such areas as music, art, physical education, and library classes (Ornstein & Levine, 1997).

Integrating students with learning disabilities into a regular classroom has had several problems. The major problem is that students with learning disabilities are not always seen as part of the class and the regular education teacher is not fully responsible for these students which can lead to the student or students being perceived as another problem that the teacher must contend with (Wesson & Keefe, 1997).

Although overall results do not show that mainstreaming or inclusion are of benefit to special needs students, there have been some good results when individual schools have taken the time and effort to train the staff in working with these students and have tried to keep classroom sizes as small as possible (Ornstein & Levine, 1997).

It is important for the media specialist to be part of a learning disabled student's school experiences for several reasons. First, the media specialist knows what skills and strategies are being taught to the whole school population and, working with the special education teacher who is familiar with the learning styles of these students, can assist in maximizing the student's learning experiences. Secondly, the media specialist can help

the learning disabled students learn to generalize, or apply a learned skill to situations other than the one being taught. The third reason is that a media specialist can be another person that the learning disabled student, who frequently lacks social skills, has meaningful contact with (Wesson & Keefe, 1995).

To do this properly media specialists must be trained and must adopt a positive attitude toward the learning disabled students. They need to know where to go for assistance in all aspects of interacting with learning disabled students, including their educational goals, their learning styles, and their self-esteem (Petrie, 1982).

There are other factors that the media specialist must take into account also. One factor is the purchase of material that will not only appeal to learning disabled students but is also written in a format and with a vocabulary that they can read with little or no assistance.

Many of the criteria used to evaluate a collection when selecting books for the regular education population can be applied to selecting materials for students with learning disabilities, such as legibility of print and illustrations in books and clarity of visuals and sound in videos or CD's. The media specialist needs to strengthen the collection to include material suitable for the learning disabled even if it means borrowing material for on a short-term basis (Petrie, 1982).

Purchasing the material necessary to accommodate learning disabled students is another facet that the media specialist may not be fully aware of, and with frequently limited school budgets, this may not be a high priority for many of them. There are places the media specialist may go for this assistance, and part of this research attempted to discover how or if these resources are used (Pride & Schultz, 1995). Media specialists

also need to be aware of the variety of material that is available to reach learning disabled students who may have different learning styles.

Previous Studies

Throughout this study, the researcher was unable to locate any previous studies mention how media specialists can best serve learning disabled students. The only information located was the article by Eliza T, Dresang written in 1977, and that article only stresses that it must be done, not how to do it. The current articles stress the need for all of the teachers of the students to be involved but do not provide how the media specialist is expected to make the concept of inclusion work in the library.

Selection of Design

The research for this paper was in the form of a survey sent to 133 school media specialists in elementary schools in the eight Southern New Jersey counties. This number was chosen to provide the researcher with a range of schools from counties that have a wide diversity in the socio-economic standards of their districts. Lists of schools provided by each county were numbered, eliminating middle and high schools, and then randomly selected using a Table of Random Numbers (Babbie, 1998). Special education schools were also eliminated since one of the purposes of this survey was to determine the effect of inclusion. If a selected school had no special education students the media specialists in these schools were asked to return the survey for purposes of record keeping.

Chapter 3

The Methodology

Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 requires that students with disabilities be placed in regular education classrooms and provided with the special services that they need to participate in that setting. This does not mean that special education classrooms will no longer be needed however. These settings may still be utilized for students with disabilities that require more intensive instruction. The students in need of these services should be included in as many regular education programs as possible including music, art, physical education, and library skills (Ornstein & Levine, 1997). Studies have shown that mainstreaming full time or part time are beneficial to many of the learning disabled students in both the academic and social spheres. To be successful, mainstreaming requires the full cooperation of the regular education teacher, the special education teacher, all other teachers who come in contact with the student, the administration, and the parents of the learning disabled students (Monahan, Marino, and Miller, 1996).

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of the school media specialist in this setting. The study examined the ways in which media specialists from the eight southern New Jersey counties accommodate the learning disabled students whether they are mainstreamed or are in self-contained classes.

Description of Methodology

The method selected for this inquiry was a self-administered questionnaire. A survey was chosen as the methodology because it is the most efficient way to reach the necessary respondents (Babbie, 1998). The questions attempted to discover how media specialists adapt the library curriculum, if at all, to meet the needs of students with disabilities. It also included how learning disabled students are graded if library skills is a graded subject in the school. The questionnaire was sent to school media specialists in randomly selected elementary schools in the eight counties in southern New Jersey.

This method was chosen for several reasons: (a) the number of questionnaires to be sent out, (b) the diverse geographical locations of the selected schools, (c) the brevity of the required answers, and (d) the amount of time available under these conditions.

The study was limited to school library media specialists because they are the ones who are responsible for the library media curriculum even though they may need to consult with the regular education teacher, the special education teacher, or a member of the Child Study Team when planning and implementing the curriculum. The questions included how students with learning disabilities attend library classes and what forms of evaluation are used when they are there. The survey also included what kind of training, if any, the school media specialist has received in working with students with disabilities and how effective they feel this training was.

The survey was limited to southern New Jersey because the counties, although different in size, and socio-economic strata, represent a distinct region of the state. The school age (5-17) population ranges from a high of 93, 414 in Camden County to a low of 12, 415 in Salem County according to the 1990 census (Horner, 1998). The number of school

districts in the counties vary from a high of 43 in Burlington County to a low of 14 in Salem County. It was limited to elementary schools because these grades are where a child's education is formed

Design of the Study

This study was designed to collect data from enough school library media specialists to represent a spectrum of experiences in the distinct geographic regions of southern New Jersey. School media specialists were chosen as respondents because they are responsible for educating learning disabled students in the media center.

Sample and Population

This questionnaire was limited to elementary school media specialists in the following counties which comprise the southern New Jersey region: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean, and Salem.

The schools were chosen from county lists that were procured from a variety of sources. Schools that were not elementary schools were eliminated and the remaining schools were numbered consecutively from the lists. Schools that are limited to special needs students were also eliminated. The remaining schools were randomly selected using Appendix E: Random Numbers in Earl Babbie's book *The Practice of Social Research*, 1998. Schools in each county were selected separately and the number of questionnaires sent to each county was proportionate to the number of schools in the county with Camden County receiving the largest number of surveys, 37, and Cape May and Ocean Counties receiving the fewest number with each county receiving six.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was designed to be easy to read and reply to. The majority of the questions asked the media specialist to select an answer from given choices, with a few requiring a brief answer. The replies were to be checked off on a short line preceding the reply. If "Other" was the chosen response, space was given on which to write a brief answer. Adequate spacing was left between the questions for ease of reading (see Appendix).

The questionnaire was constructed and revised after pretesting. After it was printed it was sent with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the inquiry to school media specialists in randomly selected elementary schools in the eight southern New Jersey counties. A pre-addressed, stamped envelope was included for ease of return.

The instructions printed at the beginning of the questionnaire included a note that any questions that the media specialist might want to answer in more detail could be continued on the back of the page. The cover letter included a statement that all replies would be kept confidential and that not all questions needed to be answered.

The survey consisted of seventeen questions that require the respondent to check off a reply. The first question asked about the presence of learning disabled students in the school system. If the response to this question was a "No" the respondent was asked to just return the questionnaire. The next four questions concerned how learning disabled students attend library and how they are graded. Questions six through eight dealt with any training in working with learning disabled students that the media specialist might have received and how he or she felt about the adequacy of their training. Question nine inquired how much professional contact the media specialist has with the teachers of the learning disabled students. Questions ten and eleven asked about materials and other supports that the media

specialists use to accommodate students with learning disabilities. The next five questions concerned school policy, statistics, and the media specialists' own personal information including length of service and their own feelings about working with learning disabled students. The final question asked the respondent if they wished to receive a copy of the results of the inquiry.

Data Collection

The data was collected from the returned responses. A chart was kept tabulating the responses as they are received. Each school was given an identification letter and as the response was received it will be placed in a folder for its county. A response date of March 3rd was given and on March 15th a second copy of the letter and survey was sent to those media specialists who had not as yet responded. A March 31st response date was given in this letter.

Data Analysis Plan

Data were analyzed by examining the results on the returned questionnaires. The results were compared by county concerning the questions on: (a) grading, (b) training, (c) accommodations made by the media specialist, (d) how learning disabled students attend library, and (e) professional contact. Other questions are explained in the text of the following chapter. Tables reporting frequencies of answers were used to make the comparisons as reported in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

Results of the Survey

A questionnaire regarding the way in which media specialists take part in the education of learning disabled students was sent to 133 school media specialists in the eight South Jersey counties. There were 83 responses to the questionnaire giving a response rate of about 62%. Of these responses, two were unusable, one because the school has no library or librarian at the present time and the other because the respondent has only been working as media specialist for one month and felt unqualified to answer the questions. Three other responses answered "No" to the first question indicating that that school does not serve learning disabled students. This made the number of useable responses 78 and the response rate for usable data was 59%.

The counties surveyed range in population from Camden County with a 1996 population of 506,447 to Salem County with a 1996 population of 67,540 (Horner, 1998).

The media specialists who responded listed school populations ranging from 90 students in a school in Cape May County, to one Gloucester County school with a population of 1,200 students. Average school populations ranged from 337 in Cape May County to 582 in Gloucester County. The average school population of all responding schools was 482 students.

The media specialists were also asked to list, if they knew, the percentage of learning disabled students in their schools. These ranged from a low of 1% in six schools in three districts, to 30% in a school in Ocean County. This last number was

accompanied by a notation that the school is a receives special education students from all schools in the district. The average percentage for all schools who responded to the survey was 9%.

The question regarding the experience of the media specialist showed a range from zero to 28 years, which is a mean of 11.3 years. The median is 13 years; however, the mode is very different with eight media specialists having 15 years experience.

Questionnaires were sent to the eight counties in southern New Jersey and there was a considerable difference in the response rate. The results therefore do not accurately represent all of the counties. As can be seen in Table 1, Burlington County, with a response rate of 84% was the best-represented county while Cumberland County with a response rate of 27% was the least represented county. The results of the returned Responses are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentage of Responses by County (n=133)

County	# Sent	# Returned	% Returned
Atlantic	15	10	67
Burlington	26	22	84
Camden	37	22	54
Cape May	6	3	50
Cumberland	11	2	27
Gloucester	17	11	65
Ocean	15	9	60
Salem	6	3	50

All of the learning disabled students attend library, either with a mainstreamed class or with a self-contained class, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

How Learning Disabled Students Attend Library (n=78)

County	Self-contained	Mainstreamed	Both
Atlantic	3	4	2
Burlington	3	7	9
Camden	3	8	10
Cape May	0	3	0
Cumberland	0	3	1
Gloucester	3	2	4
Ocean	2	2	5
Salem	0	2	1

These results do not total 78 because several media specialists noted that it depends on grade level, ability, or type of learning disability whether or not the students attend library with a mainstreamed class or a self-contained one. One media specialist mentioned that learning disabled students attend library twice a week, once with a self-contained class and once with a mainstreamed class, sometimes on the same day.

The third question in the survey asked whether or not library is a graded subject in the school. Camden and Burlington Counties, the two counties with the most schools also had the largest number of "No" responses. There were only two of the schools in the 78 that responded that give a number grade for library skills, one in Atlantic County and one in Camden County. The grades O, G, S, and U are given by 36% of the responding schools. The "Other" responses indicated that they use a portfolio approach to keep track of their student's work. The results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3Grading Procedures (n=78)

County	No Grade	A-F Grade	O,G,S,U Grade	Number Grade	Other
Atlantic	1	2	6	1	0
Burlington	11	2	6	0	0
Camden	15	1	4	1	0
Cape May	1	1	1	0	1
Cumberland	1	0	3	0	0
Gloucester	2	1	6	0	0
Ocean	7	1	1	0	1
Salem	1	1	1	0	0

Those who responded "Yes" in any form were asked if all grade levels were graded in the same manner. There were 40 responses to that question, 65% responded "Yes" and 35% responded "No". Of those who answered "Yes", eight qualified their response. For seven of them the qualification was that the grade is based on effort, conduct, and work completed. The other qualification was that library was an enrichment class, but no further explanation was provided. There were also two qualifications to the "No" response. Both media specialists noted that all students receive an "S" or a "G".

The following question was "Are learning disabled students graded in the same manner as non-learning disabled students?" There were 40 responses to this question. Again, 65% responded "Yes" but nine qualified their answers with the following explanations: grading by individual ability was mentioned by five respondents; modified work; all students get an "O" unless they lose a book, given extra help by the media specialist or her aide; and receiving help from their teacher for tests and quizzes.

Of the 35% who responded "No", their explanations included using the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and lowering the standards or modifying the work.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA'97) has changed the funding regulations. It is now permissible for school districts to use IDEA funds to benefit all children, and because the regular education teachers are now more involved in the education of learning disabled students IDEA funds may be used to give training to these teachers (Lipsky & Garner, 1998). A series of questions in the survey asked school media specialists how much if any training they had received in working with these students. The results of this question are found in Table 4.

Table 4

Training Received (n=78)

County	Yes	No
Atlantic	6	4
Burlington	5	14
Camden	10	11
Cape May	3	0
Cumberland	2	2
Gloucester	2	7
Ocean	5	4
Salem	2	1

Of those who responded "Yes", two added the disclaimer that it was very little training and another one noted that the training received was not recent. Of those who responded "No", two noted that they had a degree in special education and two noted that they have had personal experience in dealing with students with disabilities. Another media specialist responded that he or she had asked for training but it had not been forthcoming. One other response was from a media specialist who noted that she/he had received no

training, but that the training had been sufficient, which was Question 8.

Question seven asked those who responded that they had had training to check off the types of training that they had. The responses in Table 5 total more than 78 because respondents could check more than one type of training.

Table 5

Types of Training Received (n=78)

County	In-Services	Workshops	Reading Materials	Classes	Other
Atlantic	4	3	4	1	1
Burlington	4	2	3	2	1
Camden	6	2	4	4	0
Cape May	3	2	2	1	0
Cumberland	2	2	1	1	0
Gloucester	2	1	1	1	0
Ocean	5	4	3	2	0
Salem	2	2	2	1	0

Of the two media specialists who answered "Other", one had personal experience and the other had one-on-one conversations with members of the Child Study Team.

The next question was also meant to be answered by those who had responded yes to the question about training. There were 35 responses "Yes" responses to question seven and 13 responded that they felt they had had enough training although three added that they could always use more, one added that he/she maintains close contact with the teachers and a third noted that while she had received training she had not received any support. Of the 22 who responded that they had not had sufficient training many added

explanations. The explanation most offered was that they could always learn more. Others said that the training was too general and they did not have enough knowledge about the various disabilities. One media specialist noted that she would like to have more in-services with the special education teacher while another said that she had learned what she knows on the job.

Although this question was not supposed to be answered by those who had received no training, four of them chose to respond "No" to the question about training. Three added reasons for checking "No". One response was that in-services are needed, another noted that there is a variety of disabilities in the school, and the third wondered if the students feel frustrated.

Question 9 asked the media specialists how much professional contact they had with the teachers of learning disabled students. From the 78 responses, 45% reported weekly contact, 22% reported very little, 10% reported daily contact, 1% reported no contact, and 22% reported "Other". Some of those who reported very little contact added that contact was either as needed, at the instigation of the media specialist, or one ten minute conversation. For those who answered "Other", the most common explanation was that it occurred only when necessary. Other responses included: "when the teacher instigates it"; "casual"; "every six days"; "conversations with the Child Study Team"; "two times a week"; and "varies". One media specialist noted that she has three schools to supervise.

One media specialist who responded "None" added that she sees the classroom aide weekly; the teacher never comes into the library.

The question concerning purchasing policies had an 86% "Yes" response when

asked if they purchase books that are high interest/low reading level for the learning disabled students. One of these respondents noted that these purchases are for all students and another added that these purchases are made at the request of the teacher. A third noted that she encourages teacher input into these purchases. There was a 9% "No" response to the question, although one added that there frequently is no money in the library budget at all. Four respondents or 4% answered "Other" to the question noting that purchases of these materials were meant for all students. One respondent, 1%, answered both.

Question eleven requested the media specialists to check off any additional supports that they use when working with learning disabled students. Table 6 shows the result of that question. The numbers exceed 78 because the media specialists could check off as many as applied.

Table 6
Additional Supports (n=77)

County	None	Visual Aids	Computer Programs	Partners	Aide	Other
Atlantic	1	3	2	6	5	1
Burlington	3	9	10	10	15	2
Camden	0	16	11	10	16	1
Cape May	0	3	0	2	1	1
Cumberland	0	2	3	0	2	0
Gloucester	0	4	1	3	4	2
Ocean*	0	7	5	3	6	3
Salem	0	2	1	3	2	1

Note. *There was one respondent who did not answer this question.

The respondents who answered "Other" explained their answers as follows: "giving the students more time to complete assignments"; "having a teacher stay"; "giving individual help"; "using books with audiocassettes"; "using candy and stickers for rewards"; "planning with teacher"; "one-on-one instruction"; "modifying the lessons"; "using hands on instruction"; and "having small group instruction". In six of the "Aide" replies, the media specialist noted that it was either for one class or in one instance for one student. One noted that it was school policy. One respondent who uses classroom partners noted that she had noted social and academic progress using this form.

A question about whether or not library was a preparation period for the classroom teacher had a "Yes" response of 80%. One media specialist added that she thought that this was a terrible idea and another added that the teachers frequently stay. There was a 15% "No" response with indications that the teachers should stay but they do not, that they stay for special education classes only, or that an aide stays. There was also a 4% "Other" response with the explanations that the teacher stays for book checkout, that it depends on grade level whether or not it is a preparation period, or that it is a preparation period only for special education teachers.

The final question about working with learning disabled students asked media specialists how they felt about working with learning disabled students. There were 15 respondents who checked "Other" as their answer. Three replied that they enjoy all children, two responded that they provide more time and help for the students as necessary, one responded that the learning disabled students behave better when in a mainstreamed class, one noted that testing is difficult, and two said that the media specialist's relationship is enhanced with the regular teachers. One also added that it was

her job and she did it. Two felt that they needed more training, two noted that having an aide stay was a big help, one replied that she taught to multiple intelligences and one another noted that it was very frustrating. Those who answered that they enjoyed working with learning disabled students also noted that they preferred the students to come in self-contained classes because planning instruction was easier, or that they enjoyed it when the students were cooperative. The results are shown in Table 7. The numbers do not total 78 since several media specialists checked more than one answer.

Table 7

Feelings About Working with Learning Disabled Students

County	Enjoy it	Difficult	Other	No Answer
Atlantic	4	3	2	1
Burlington	11	9	3	0
Camden	15	3	5	0
Cape May	2	1	0	0
Cumberland	2	2	1	0
Gloucester	5	2	1	1
Ocean	6	3	1	0
Salem	1	1	2	0

The media specialists were asked if they would like to receive a copy of the results of the inquiry. There were 55 who responded that they would like to receive a copy.

A summary of the responses and recommendations for further study are found in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

Recent legislation has mandated that students with learning disabilities be educated as much as possible in regular classroom settings. Because of this increased focus on inclusion the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCREI) has found several factors need to be in place to make inclusion successful. Among these factors are the time needed for collaboration between all those involved in a learning disabled child's education and support for the staff and students. This means that staff needs to be trained in working with learning disabled students through professional development. It should be on-going and not just one brief workshop or in-service. As many needed services need to be in place for the learning disabled student including, but not limited to individualized instruction geared to the students' learning styles and assessment procedures that are adapted to a student's individual needs (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998,).

As a member of a student's team of teachers, the library media specialist needs to be included in all phases of this professional development.

Conclusions

From the results of this survey, several conclusions may be drawn. The responses are being compared by county, rather than years of experience or school size

because the responses vary little in those areas. The socio-economic strata of the various communities also played very little part in the responses and so was not considered as a basis of comparison.

Five of the eight counties have learning disabled students who attend the media center in either self-contained or mainstreamed classes or both. Cape May County is the only one that has all students from the responding schools attending in mainstreamed classes, and Salem and Cumberland Counties have no students attending in self-contained classes. These districts are following the most recent legislation as put forth in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act '97 (IDEA'97).

Grading procedures vary greatly. Of the schools in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties only one school in each county does not grade for library, while in Burlington and Camden Counties, two of the larger counties in terms of populations, no grades are given in 11 and 15 districts respectively. Ocean County also has more schools that do not grade than do grade. Only two schools in Gloucester County do not grade for library skills. Grades in the O, G, S, U format are the ones given most often in those districts that grade for library skills. These grades however for the most part are given for effort and conduct rather than for the quality of the work done or student learning.

Although 65% of the respondents answered "Yes" when asked if they grade learning disabled students in the same manner as they do non-learning disabled students, there were several qualifications to this answer. This was consistent throughout the counties with at least one in every county stating that they took the learning disabilities into account in some way.

Training media specialists, as well as other teachers of special subjects such as art music and physical education, to work with learning disabled students is now permissible under federal funding (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998). However, not all school districts have begun to implement this. Results by county show that of the respondents, Cape May County has trained media specialists in working with the learning disabled more than the other counties. Burlington County appears to have done the least training with only five of the 19 reporting schools having given the media specialists training.

The most popular type of training across the counties was in-service. Salem County was the only one in which the training was divided among all of the choices. There were 13 media specialists who had taken college or university classes. Two of these were special education teachers who later became media specialists and the others had taken training on their own as they felt the need. There were nineteen who had read material on their own. Both of these groups appear in all counties with teachers in Camden County among the most frequent in each group.

Media specialists who responded "No" to the question about sufficient training come from all the counties. The majority in each county felt that even though they had had some training they could always use more. Those who replied "No" to the question regarding any training and who also replied "No" to sufficient training were all from Camden County. All of these responses indicate that the media specialists care about doing their job well and would welcome relevant training

From the responses to the question regarding professional contact, the conclusion can be drawn that most of the media specialists across all the counties have at least minimal contact with the classroom or special education teacher. Those that do not have

minimal contact seem to make the time to consult with teachers. Two media specialists seemed to resent the lack of contact time, and this problem needs to be addressed.

Media specialists across all counties seem to have taken into account the reading skills of learning disabled students when purchasing books for the collection, although four of them noted that they purchase these books for all students. This is a step in the right direction in making inclusion work.

Other accommodations such as visual aids, computer programs, classroom partners, and aides attending with the class seem to be widely utilized across the counties. Only two counties, Burlington (three responses), and Atlantic (one response) make no accommodations for the learning disabled students. Classroom aides are used the most in Atlantic, Burlington, and Salem Counties while Camden, Cape May, Gloucester, and Ocean Counties rely on visual aids to accommodate the students. Overall, most media specialists are making an effort to accommodate learning disabled students in as many ways as they can, depending on the school's budget and policies.

Class time in the library as a preparation period for elementary teachers is consistent across all eight counties. In Gloucester, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties there were no schools who reported that the teacher must stay with their class in the library. This can be a difficult proposition for large classes if there are several learning disabled students involved.

Media specialists from every county reported that they enjoy working with learning disabled students, even though it is sometimes difficult to prepare for them. Because inclusion, for the present, is being stressed, media specialists who can accept this and provide meaningful instruction for the learning disabled should be highly sought

after. Camden County, with 15 of the 21 respondents saying that they enjoy working with these students, is leading the way in this respect.

Recommendations

From the responses given in the survey, it seems that the first thing the elementary schools need to do is to provide meaningful training for all teachers, including the media specialist, in working with learning disabled students. Even those media specialists who have had training state that they could always use more. Classifying and labeling have changed over time and are still changing (Ornstein & Levine, 1997). Teaching strategies and methods for reaching learning disabled students has also changed and will continue to change. Everyone on the staff of a school needs to be kept informed of the changes in the laws and procedures. The media specialists are ready, according to this survey, to accept the challenges presented by inclusion if they are given proper direction.

Regular classroom teachers and special education teachers also need to be encouraged to take the time to work with the media specialists in providing recommendations that will work for their students. Many of the responses to this survey indicated that the media specialist is given little information about a child's abilities. Since many accommodate their grades to the student's ability, they should be given the necessary information. Although the media specialists should have access to this information, nothing in the survey indicated that this is made known to them. The results indicate that it is most often the media specialist who requests the information rather than the information being made available to them.

This is a relatively new topic for media specialists. More studies need to be done so that the media specialist can do the best job possible for the learning disabled students.

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Appendix



March 1999

Dear Librarian;

I am a graduate student at Rowan University in the Program in School and Public Librarianship.

For my master's thesis I am conducting an inquiry into the way learning disabled students are taught library skills in the elementary schools in the eight Southern New Jersey counties.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and you need not answer all the questions. Every answer you provide will help my research reflect the current situation accurately. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please sign this letter below and return it and the completed survey in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by March 31st. If you should choose not to participate in this survey would you please return it for my records.

If you have any questions please contact me at the phone number listed below. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Holly Willett at 256-4759.

Sincerely,

Janet W. Lani
(609) 423-0103

Holly G. Willett Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Library Education Advisor

I agree that I am participating in this survey voluntarily

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check appropriate responses. Use the back of the page if needed for explanations.

1. Does your school serve learning disabled students?

- Yes, and they go to the library with their classes
- Yes, but they do not go to the library with their classes
- No (please return questionnaire for my records)

2. How do learning disabled students come to the library?

- With a self-contained class
- With a mainstreamed class
- Other _____

3. Do you grade students for their work in the library?

- No (please go to Question 6)
- Yes (letter grades A-E)
- Yes (letter grades O, S, U)
- Yes (number grade)

4. Are all grade levels graded in the same manner?

- Yes
- No

Please explain _____

5. Are learning disabled students graded in the same manner as non-learning disabled students?

- Yes
- No

Please explain _____

6. Have you received any training in working with learning disabled students?

Yes (please go to #7)

No (please go to #9)

7. What kind of training have you received in working with learning disabled students?

In-services

Workshops

Reading material

College or university classes

Other _____

8. Do you feel that you have had sufficient training?

Yes

No

Please explain _____

9. How much professional contact do you maintain with the teachers of the learning disabled students?

None

Very little

Weekly

Daily

Other _____

10. Do you allocate any of your budget for materials targeted for the learning disabled students such as high interest/low reading level material?

Yes

No

Other _____

11. What other supports or techniques do you use to accommodate the learning disabled students?

- None
- Visual aids
- Computer programs
- Classroom partners
- Classroom aide attending with student
- Other _____

12. Is Library a preparation period for teachers or must they remain with the class?

- Yes, it is a preparation period
- No the teacher must remain with the class
- Other _____

13. What is your feeling about working with learning disabled students?

- I enjoy the challenge of working with them
- Planning instruction is difficult for mixed
- Other _____

14. What is the approximate population of your school?

Students

15. Approximately what percentage are identified as learning disabled?

%

16. How many years have you been a school library media specialist?

Years

17. Would you like to receive a copy of the results of my inquiry?

Yes
 No

Name _____

School _____

Address _____

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey.