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THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALIST
AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS,
AND SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALISTS

Veronica M. Gaskill

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
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Approved by

Date Approved May 4, 1998

ABSTRACT

Veronica M. Gaskill. The Role of the School Media Specialist As Perceived by Principals, Teachers, and School Media Specialists. 1998. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship).

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of the school media specialist as perceived by principals, teachers, and school media specialists. According to the current literature, the role of the school media specialists is multi-faceted. The role includes teacher, information specialist, technology person, and instructional consultant. A survey was prepared to determine if principals, teachers, and media specialists perceived the role in the same way. Two principals and thirty-five teachers were surveyed for this project. Three school media specialists were interviewed. The participants were from two districts in Atlantic County in the state of New Jersey. There were two schools in one district and one school in the second district. For the most part, principals, teachers, and media specialists defined the role of media specialist as outlined in the current literature. One or two areas in each role needed to be clarified by the school media specialist. The role of instructional consultant needs to be clarified, and the involvement of the school media specialist in technology should have been outlined. The school media specialists should keep the staff and principals updated and aware concerning the role the school media specialist fills.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Veronica M. Gaskill. The Role of the School Media Specialist as Perceived by Principals, Teachers, and School Media Specialists. 1998. (Under the direction of Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship).

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of the school media specialist as perceived by principals, teachers, and school media specialists. For the most part principals, teachers, and media specialists defined the role of media specialist as outlined in the current literature. A number of respondents were unsure of some of the areas covered in the role.

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Chapter 1

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

The role of the media specialist has been broadened over the last ten years with increased technological developments. The school media specialist should take on three primary areas of responsibility as described in *Information Power*. The aspects of the role are information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant (American Association of School Librarians (AASL), 1988). Along with these expected responsibilities, come unexpected responsibilities that have been created with the development of technology. The media specialist keeps computers operating for the students and staff. When there is a problem with televisions, VCRs, and laser disc players, the media specialist is expected to fix the problem.

Each district has its own expectations for the media specialist. These expectations don't always go along with the defined role in the guideline that *Information Power* details. In some elementary and middle schools, the primary job of the media specialist centers on teaching library skills to all grade levels. These library skills are usually taught in isolation, not integrated into any part of the curriculum. In most cases the media specialist is used to cover teacher preparation periods and is grouped with the teachers who teach gym, music, shop, computers, art, and health. When this is the primary focus of the media specialist, there is little time to focus on the the actual multi-faceted role of the school media specialist.

Need for the Study

The purpose of this research was to determine the role of the media specialist as perceived by the principal and staff. The question to be answered was “What should the role of the media specialist be as defined by the current literature and competencies?” This was compared to the perceived role of the media specialist by the staff and administration of the school. The various aspects of the role of the media specialist were examined using *Information Power* (AASL, 1988), *Power Teaching* (Vandergrift, 1994), and the competency requirements created by the 61st International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) General Conference. The article containing the competencies is entitled “What do school librarians need to know? Guidelines for competency requirements”(1988). In *Information Power*, the role of librarian is divided into three areas: information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant (AASL, 1988). In the IFLA guidelines for competencies, the role of media specialist is broken into three areas of concern: information studies, management, and education. The librarian should be able to provide and organize information for the purpose of increasing the knowledge of each individual student, integrate information skills into the curriculum, and possess skills to manage the library smoothly. According to *Power Teaching*, the area of primary importance for the media specialist is teaching (Vandergrift, 1994). Vandergrift believes librarians must seek out teaching responsibilities, so they will gain the respect of the staff and be recognized as colleagues.

The study could help the media specialist serve the school staff and administration in a more productive way. This research also provided the media specialist with background information in order to develop the role of the media specialist of the local school district more fully. The role might resemble the role as described in *Information Power* which is more balanced than the role currently undertaken by most media specialists in schools.

As the role of media specialist becomes more complicated, there is a growing need to develop a clear description of this role. The twenty-first century is quickly approaching. With each passing week, more advanced technology is being developed. As new technology is introduced, the media specialist is expected to know what is available, how it is used, and how it will benefit the school. This is a huge responsibility for one person to undertake especially when the primary focus of the media specialist has been teacher of library skills.

Methodology

A letter explaining the purpose of the study was sent to the two superintendents whose districts were being used in the project. Included with this letter was a copy of the questionnaire used to survey the principals and teachers. These same questions were used to interview the school's media specialist. A total of 35 teachers and two principals were surveyed for the project. Three media specialists were interviewed.

The goal of this project was to help the media specialist understand why the perceptions of the principals and teachers might differ from the role as described in the literature. This information might help the librarian to promote the role of the media specialist and change the perceptions of teachers and principals.

Two studies have been located that deal with similar topics. One paper is entitled "A Comparison of Role Perceptions of the School Media Specialist Among Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and Library Media Specialist" (Pemberton and Smith, 1978). The other study is "A Comparison of Role Perceptions of the School Library Media Specialists Among Library Media Educators, School Library Media Specialists, Principals, and Classroom Teachers" (Scott, 1986).

Definition of Terms

Librarian: For the purpose of this research this term may be used interchangeably with media specialist.

Media Center: A learning resource center in a school where a full range of print and audio-visual media, necessary equipment, and accompanying services are accessible to students, parents, and teachers.

Media Specialist: An individual who, if he or she is responsible for instructional decisions, meets requirements for teaching and has a broad professional preparation in educational media. The media specialist is the basic media professional in the school program.

Information Specialist: This aspect of the role calls for the media specialist to provide resources for both teachers and students. Adequate access to materials is provided to staff and students. Students are assisted in identifying, locating, and interpreting information.

Teacher: Information skills are taught by the school media specialist as an integrated part of the school's curriculum. Teachers and the media specialist jointly plan, teach, and evaluate instruction in information access.

Instructional Consultant: The school media specialist participates in curriculum development on a regular basis. Assistance is provided to teachers in using information resources and incorporating information skills into the classroom curriculum.

The review of the literature is contained in Chapter 2. The literature focused on the role of the school media specialist. Literature which discussed the perceptions of principals and teachers is contained in the literature review. The methods and findings are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, while the entire study is discussed in Chapter 5. The final chapter outlined a few recommendations based on the results of the study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In order to conduct this project, it was necessary to gather current information regarding the role of the school media specialist. There are a number of resources available that provide detailed descriptions for the role of the school librarian. The role of the school media specialist has changed over the last twenty years. Many of the changes in the role are being driven by the increased use of technology in school media centers. The increased use of technology has created an abundance of information that the school media specialist is responsible for controlling. These changes have created different perceptions of what role the school media specialist plays in a school and a school district.

In addition to the rapidly changing responsibilities, the perceptions of administrators and teachers may also affect the role of the school media specialist. There have been a few studies conducted on the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the school media specialist.

A search for a definition to describe the current role began by reading *Information Power* (AASL, 1988) and *Power Teaching* (Vandergrift, 1994) which describe the expected role of the school media specialist. The search then turned to current articles on the topic. The Rowan University Library databases were accessed; the term “role of school librarian” was used in the search process. *Library Literature* and other education databases were used. The Atlantic County Public Library was another source used. Atlantic County Library has InfoTrack as well as many library journals available on film. The Internet was searched by going to the American Library

Association's homepage and using the search engines Lycos and Excite. One doctoral dissertation was located through the search and interlibrary loan was used to access the document.

The use of scheduling impacts the role of the school media specialist. In most elementary schools the school media specialist fulfills the need for a teacher preparation period. Because classes are scheduled throughout the entire day, the librarian's time may be monopolized by teaching isolated library skills.

The role of the school library specialist is driven by the district's expectations . The expectations are often created by someone other than the school media specialist. The teachers and principals in any given district view the role of the librarian based on their own expectations. The literature details some reasons why varying perceptions are held about the role of the school librarian.

The Role of the Media Specialist

The major portion of information on the three primary areas of the school media specialist role is contained in *Information Power*. This source of information outlines the three areas as information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant (AASL, 1988). For the purpose of this survey, another role that has been added in most recent years is expert on technology. In some literature this role falls under the category of information specialist or instructional consultant, but for the purpose of this project a separate category was used.

Information Specialist

Information specialist, the first area in the role of the school media specialist, has numerous duties. The area includes providing access to all types of information (AASL, 1988). This information is obtained from a variety of sources: print, video, audio,

CD-ROM, laser, and Internet. The addition of the new technologies allows the librarian to be a more powerful information provider (Waters, 1994). The librarian provides resources for teachers. This includes providing teachers with a list of what the local media center holds and searching for other materials available through sources outside the local media center. A professional library should be established by the school media specialist.

In developing a collection, the librarian is responsible for materials to be purchased, borrowed, and produced (Vandergrift, 1994). The media specialist is also responsible for evaluating this information (AASL, 1988). The librarian must be familiar with the information prior to its becoming available to media center users. All of the media purchased by the media center is the responsibility of the media specialist. The guidelines for purchasing of media should be found in a selection policy the media specialist is responsible for creating. The approval of a selection policy details the material a library has and why the library has it. All purchase decisions are based on these guidelines. Along with developing this policy, the librarian also creates policies that deal with areas of circulation and use. These policies must provide equal access to all materials and equipment in the media center (AASL, 1988). The final component of the information specialist centers around the use of this information (AASL, 1988). Students are instructed in gathering information and being able to discern accurate from inaccurate information. This task falls on the librarian. In the draft of the new AASL/AECT National Guidelines the area of information specialist extends to information issues which include strategies for locating, accessing, and evaluating information not only in the local media center but beyond the four walls of the media center (AASL, 1996). This has become a very important issue since there are numerous amounts of electronic information available to students.

Teacher

Another responsibility of the school media specialist is teacher. This aspect of the role includes teaching students information skills within the context of classroom curriculum. In order to develop these skills the school media specialist must work closely with teachers (AASL, 1988). The library media specialist must teach students to use the information they encounter. The students must also be able to communicate what they find in a variety of ways. The school media specialist is expected to teach students to use multimedia presentations as a means of communicating with others (AASL, 1988). The school media specialist teaches parents to assist students in selecting appropriate books for reading pleasure (AASL, 1988). The librarian offers workshops and open library hours to provide parents with the information they need to help their children.

Teachers are instructed in workshops and meetings about the current trends in information retrieval (AASL, 1988). The AASL/AECT National Guidelines Philosophy: Draft #8 acknowledges the need for the school media specialists to keep current on research which deals with teaching and learning (AASL, 1996). As a teacher of teachers, media specialists continue to learn throughout their careers in order to expand their knowledge (AASL, 1996). According to Kay Vandergrift (1994), one of the main functions of the school librarian is teaching. This part of the job separates the school librarian from other types of librarians (Vandergrift, 1994). Although some librarians choose to drop “teacher” from their title, teaching is part of the role. When the librarian instructs students, teachers, or parents, teaching is taking place. The school librarian has the distinct chance to bridge the two roles of teacher and librarian (AASL, 1996). The school media specialist must take every opportunity to share in the teaching experience in order to gain the respect of the other teachers in the building (AASL, 1996).

Instructional Consultant

Followed by the area of teaching is the librarian's responsibility as instructional consultant. The area of consultant is one of the main responsibilities of the school media specialist. Over the last thirty years, the role of the school librarian has changed dramatically. The original role of librarians was to support the role of the teachers which put them in the category of service. This role has expanded to include curriculum development (Grazier, 1979). The research states that there are many outside the media area that question the qualifications of school media specialist to do the job of curriculum development (Grazier, 1979). The responsibility for preparing them to be developers of curriculum lies with the institutions that train the media specialist. Media specialists working with teachers to design instruction has been the goal of school librarianship. Instructional design separates today's media specialist from yesterday's librarian. Although some library education programs are training graduates to fill the role of instructional consultant, many librarians are not developing this role (Royal, 1983). Librarians in public, university, and special libraries have no need to develop curriculum skills and should not be expected to do so, but those who are going to work in school media centers truly need to develop these curriculum skills in order to be taken seriously by administrators and staff.

Along with having sufficient knowledge in the development of curriculum, the librarian should have a wide range of teaching experiences that create a foundation for her job as school media specialist. The media specialist provides teachers with a wide range of resources and teaching methods. These resources enable the classroom teacher to provide the students with many sources of information in a variety of ways (AASL, 1988). The media specialist is encouraged to participate at all levels of curriculum development. This includes participating in districts' curriculum development as well as assessment projects to be used throughout the district (AASL, 1988). In keeping with the need to continue

learning, media specialists keep current on the latest methods in developing curriculum (AASL, 1988). They develop curriculum to include information skills in all the content areas of curriculum, so students have numerous opportunities to use these skills in a variety of areas. This is part of the concept of teaching skills in context. With repeated use of information skills, students can retain the skills more easily. This would also provide many chances to practice these skills. With a place on the curriculum committee, librarians take on an additional role of leadership within the school (AASL, 1988). With this role as leader, media specialists have the ability to design authentic learning which is integrated throughout the school curriculum (AASL, 1996).

Technology

The most recently added area of the media specialist role involves the addition of all the new technologies. This responsibility has the potential to consume large amounts of time. With the ever changing world of technology, the school media specialist must be constantly reading and evaluating the new developments in the field of information access. The teaching of skills for life long learning which include information retrieval must be a high priority for schools as the twenty-first century approaches. The addition of computer and multi media technologies gives media specialists more opportunities to provide information; therefore, they are able to teach broader information skills (Waters, 1994). Technology allows media specialists to provide computer-based data to their students. They must also teach strategies that enable students to access and evaluate this data (Simpson, 1996). More than ever before librarians must concern themselves with various programs and sources of information. As part of the information specialist area, they must choose computer programs and information access which will best fit the needs of the people they serve. The school media specialists must evaluate the information. Then they must make it part of the information passed on to students and

staff. Since 1992, the area where computers have been used the most is library management (Miller & Shontz, 1996). Some of the areas included in the technology part of the role include: computer skills, coordinating media program activities and resources with teachers, locating resources outside of the school for teachers and students, providing interlibrary loan access, provide access to distance learning and cable television, planning and managing Internet and e-mail activities, and providing leadership in computer related activities (Miller & Shontz, 1996). One of the major problems with the advances in the technology field involves the addition of this responsibility to an already crowded schedule. Librarians still attempt to balance all the other roles with the added role technology plays in their media center. This usually means longer hours and roles that should be filled by more than one person (St. Lifer, 1996). According to Martha Morrill (1995), the job of the media specialist is no longer limited to managing the media center. The library media specialist is expected to coordinate the integration of technology into all areas of curriculum. The librarian plans activities and creates ideas to use the technology. Librarians need to balance all of the roles of the media specialist and delegate duties where possible, so they are free to become active change agents within the school community. The school media specialist fulfills all of these roles in varying degrees (Morrill, 1995).

These areas do not need to conflict, but the many tasks associated with the roles are difficult for one person to handle. Managing a media center is a full-time position for a trained professional. Working with teachers in the area of instructional development is another full-time position for a professional (Jenkins & Naylor, 1988). If the school media specialist fulfills all the roles detailed in the literature, he or she would be doing two full-time professional jobs. These two jobs could cause confusion among media specialists, principals, and teachers. Principals and teachers have their own perceptions of the role of school media specialist.

Perception of Principal

Literature and research on the perceptions of school media specialists focuses on principal and teacher perceptions. In a survey conducted by *School Library Journal*, the principals surveyed supported the need for a school media center (Olson, 1996). At the same time there seems to be a discrepancy about the role the school media specialist will play. The biggest problem for principals is how to make the role of school media specialist more effective with the continuing changes in retrieving information (Pemberton & Smith, 1978). In order to function in the role of school media specialist, the school media specialist needs to know what the expectations of the principal are (Scott, 1987). The principal must also be made aware of the role of the school media specialist as described in the current literature. Usually information about the school media specialist and the media program is left out of administrative training. Administrators do not read library journals and do not attend library conventions. Their primary source of information about the job comes from the school media specialist (Hartzell, 1997). According to a study conducted by the state of North Carolina, all principals do not have the same expectations for the school media specialist. These expectations may vary from principal to principal. The principal's expectations may differ from those of the media specialist and those of the teacher (Scott, 1987). One of the issues stated in a number of the literature sources deals with the principal's need for an improved understanding of the various roles of the school media specialist. This improved understanding should come from the media specialist. The media specialist is the main source of information about the activities of the media center. The responsibility of informing the principal lies with the school media specialist (Jenkins & Naylor, 1988).

In a study of the perception of principals regarding school media specialists conducted in the North Carolina, principals expected the media specialist to be the major source of information on the use of technology in education (Jenkins & Naylor, 1988).

This follows the changing role the school media specialist find herself in. The addition of technology responsibility has been laid at the door of the school media center.

Perceptions of Teachers

Teachers most frequently interact with the school media specialist. They also have their own set of perceptions about the school media specialist's role in the school. According to a survey conducted by *School Librarian's Workshop*, the job librarians felt the least prepared for was teacher collaboration (Toor & Weisburg, 1995). In order for this to happen, teachers and library media specialist must work together to develop curriculum. When teachers and the media specialist work together, the media center will be put to full use (Pemberton & Smith, 1978).

Teachers are not always willing to work with the school media specialist. One reason given for this situation lies in the fact that teachers, might be taken as showing incompetence for their asking for or accepting assistance from the school media specialist (Bell & Totlen, 1992). Another survey stated that teachers do not believe media specialists have the proper training to work with them (Pemberton & Smith, 1978).

In a study conducted in Australia, teachers noted the most important job of the school media specialist involved preparing students to access, evaluate, and use information. They also stated that one of the primary roles of the school media specialist should be to create an atmosphere of comfort in the media center. Of the teachers surveyed in this study, one half of them felt that working with the media specialist to plan and implement units was a major role of the school media specialist (Waters, 1994).

Summary

This chapter discusses the role of the media specialist in the school media center. The chapter also includes research on teacher and principal perceptions. The

literature agrees on a major point: Teachers, principals, and school media specialists have a mixed understanding of what the role of the school media specialist entails.

The literature discusses reasons why the role of the librarian has changed over the last twenty years. This role has changed dramatically with the inclusion of technology and the information highway. School media specialists should be responsible for keeping the principal and teachers informed about this new and extended role. The literature also suggests that teacher and administrative training should include information about the role of the school media center in the school community.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The subject of this thesis was chosen because of the ever-changing role of the school media specialist. Over the past ten years the role has broadened to include many tasks that were not present in the past. The major questions surrounding the role are centered around the areas of instructional consultant and technology.

A survey was constructed using guidelines from Babbie (1998) and developing questions based on the role of the school media specialist as described in *Information Power*. Ideas for questions were also taken from a dissertation titled “A Comparison of Role Perceptions of the Library Media Specialist Among Library Media Specialists, principals, and classroom teachers” (Scott, 1987). These surveys also formed the basis for the interviews of the school librarians.

Participants

The participants for this study were chosen because of their availability and location. The districts are located near each other and are familiar to the researcher.

District A is located in a shore community with a year round population of 8431 according to the 1990 census. The district serves pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The district has two schools. The elementary school houses pre-kindergarten through fourth, and the middle school houses grades five through eight. The district is managed by an appointed school board and is administered by a superintendent. The district is currently in the process of expanding in order to keep class size small.

The student population of the elementary building is 377. Each homeroom has twenty or fewer students. School 1 has 21 regular classroom teachers. There are two

basic skills teachers and one resource room teacher. There are five special teachers who teach art, music, computers, gym, and Spanish. There is an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher who works in both schools in the district. There are also two part-time teachers who are shared with the middle school. They teach Project Challenge which is a gifted and talented program. The building is administered by one principal. This building has a full-time school media specialist with a full-time aide. The schedule in the library is semi-flexible. The librarian teaches library skills in the context of classroom curriculum. The library is open throughout the day from 8:00 to 3:30 with few exceptions.

School two, the middle school, includes fifth through eighth grade. The total population of the school is 260. Each class has approximately 21 students. There are 15 regular classroom teachers on staff. There are two basic skills teachers and two resource room teachers. There are five special area teachers who teach gym, technology, home economics, art, and instrumental music. The building is administered by one principal. This building has a full-time school media specialist with a full-time aide. Flexible scheduling is followed in this library. Teachers may schedule classes anytime, but teachers are responsible for students. The librarian assists the teacher. The hours for the middle school library are 8:00 A. M. to 5:00 P. M.

District B is also a shore community. The year round population of this community is 14,000 according to the city clerk's office. The district serves a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade which is housed in one building. The district is managed by an appointed school board and administered by a superintendent.

School three has a total enrollment of 991 students. There is a principal and an assistant principal. There are 39 classroom teachers. Each class has an average class size of 25 students. There are 10 teachers who are responsible for special subjects which include art, music, gym, shop, instrumental music, computers, and technology. There is also one teacher who teaches gifted and talented for the district. The staff also includes

two special education teachers along with three resource room teachers. There are two teachers who teach a bilingual program and one ESL teacher. The district has a guidance counselor. There is a full-time media specialist with two part-time aides. The library follows a flexible schedule. The librarian does not teach library skills to groups of students. She teaches them as the need arises. The library is open from 8:30 A. M. to 3:30 P. M

Limitations

The results of this project are limited because there were only two school districts used for the survey. The two districts were very similar in structure. The school media center in both districts operates on a flexible and semi-flexible schedule. There were too few schools and teachers used in the project to generalize the results of the information gathered. The results, conclusions, and recommendations were limited to the three media specialists who participated in the project.

Apparatus

The survey (Appendix B) for this project was developed using the role description of the media specialist found in *Information Power*. Ideas for a number of questions came from the dissertation by W. A. Scott entitled “ A Comparison of Role Perceptions of the School Media Specialist among Library Media Educators, School Library Media Specialists, Principals, and Classroom Teachers” (1987).

The survey contains 25 statements which asked for the participants to make a selection from among five answers. They could strongly agree, agree, be unsure, disagree, or strongly disagree. There are ten questions about teaching assignments and the use of the media center which enabled the respondents to remain anonymous.

The questions for the interviews were from the survey used with teachers and principals. The media specialists gave responses and also added information as it was requested. They felt free to explain or give details on any of the questions.

Procedure

The survey was developed after the literature was researched. A letter seeking permission for the survey was submitted to the thesis advisor along with the survey and a cover letter. Upon receiving approval the survey was pre-tested by two teachers who were not employed by either district A or B. Changes were made to the survey based on suggestions from the thesis advisor and the teachers who pre-tested the survey.

Letters seeking approval for the survey (Appendix B) were delivered to district A and B on Monday, February 9, 1998. District A replied immediately that the surveys could be delivered on Thursday, February 12, 1998. District B replied on Wednesday, February 11, 1998 with permission to deliver the surveys on February 12, 1998.

The surveys were delivered on Thursday, February 12, 1998 to all three schools along with a cover letter to be included with each survey (Appendix B). They were told at the time of delivery that they would be picked up on February 20, 1998. Instructions were given to the school principals to randomly select teachers from across the grade levels to participate in the project. Schools One and Two were each given 12 surveys, one for the principal and 11 for teachers. Thirty surveys were delivered to School Three; one was to be filled out by the principal and the remainder were to be given to teachers.

The participants were not contacted prior to the survey in order to keep all survey responses confidential. The two communities involved in the study are small towns. The teachers in both districts are known by the researcher. In order to get open

and honest answers it was necessary to keep as much anonymity as possible. The teachers are not identified in anyway in the project report or on the survey.

The surveys were picked up from Schools One and Two on February 20, 1998. All of these surveys were returned completed. School Three returned two surveys on February 20, 1998. On February 25, 1998 another three surveys were collected. Another eight surveys were collected on March 3, 1998. The principal of School Three did not participate in the survey.

The media specialist from School One was interviewed on March 3, 1998. On March 4, 1998 the media specialist from School Two was interviewed. An interview was conducted on March 6, 1998 with the media specialist from School Three.

The surveys were analyzed using a data sheet. Data sheets were created for all three groups of respondents: principals, teachers, and media specialists. The questions were then grouped according to the four areas covered in the role of the school media specialist: information specialist, teacher, instructional consultant, and technology. These areas were compared among the three groups of respondents. This information was compared to the information found in the literature. Chapter 4 contains the results of the analysis.

Chapter 4

Results

A total of fifty-two surveys were sent out to teachers in three different schools covering two districts. Thirty-five surveys were returned by teachers. Three principals were surveyed for the study and two principals returned their surveys. Three media specialists were interviewed for the study. Tables were created to show the responses of the groups surveyed. There are three tables of raw data in Appendix C: one table showing the responses of principals (Table A), another table showing the responses of teachers (Table B), and a third table showing the responses of the media specialists (Table C). The survey questions covered the four areas included in the role of the media specialist as discussed in the literature. These roles were information specialist, teacher, instructional consultant, and technology. The responses were categorized based on these roles. The purpose of the survey was to determine if there were any differences in the perceptions of the role of the school media specialist among teachers, principals, and media specialists.

Media Specialist as Teacher

The role of the media specialist as teacher was covered in questions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 13. The responses of the teachers, principals, and media specialists are charted in Table 1. Question three in this category, which stated, “The LMS rather than teachers, teaches all library skills,” had a mixed response. All three of the media specialists disagreed with this statement. The two principals who responded both disagreed with this statement. Of the 35 teachers who responded, fourteen disagreed, twelve agreed, but nine teachers were unsure.

Table 1

Media Specialist as Teacher

Questions	SA	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	SD	NA
Teachers' Responses ($\underline{n} = 35$)						
Tches lib skills	15	10	5	3	2	0
Tches all lib skills	3	9	9	11	3	0
In-service training for teachers	10	8	5	6	4	2
Some scheduled lib classes	18	9	2	4	2	0
Audiovisual Instr	16	11	4	3	1	0
Principals' Responses ($\underline{n} = 2$)						
Tches lib skills	2	0	0	0	0	0
Tches all lib skills	0	0	0	0	2	0
In-service training for teachers	0	0	1	1	0	0
Some scheduled lib classes	0	0	1	1	0	0
Audiovisual Instr	0	1	1	0	0	0
Media Specialists' Responses ($\underline{n} = 3$)						
Tches lib skills	0	2	0	0	1	0
Tches all lib skills	0	0	0	0	3	0
In-service training for teachers	1	0	0	2	0	0
Some scheduled lib classes	0	0	1	1	0	0
Audiovisual Instr	0	3	0	0	0	0

Question four stated that the media specialist provides in-service training for all teachers at least once a year. Two of the media specialists stated that they did not provide in-service training for their teachers. The other media specialist said she did provide training. The principal of the school where this media specialist works stated that he did not know whether training was provided. The other principal disagreed with the statement that training was provided. Eighteen teachers agreed that there was training. Five teachers were unsure if there was in-service training. Ten teachers disagreed with the statement. The differences in answers could be explained by possible confusion over the definition of in-service training. Question 13 deals with instruction on audiovisual equipment. One principal was unsure about this statement. The other principal agreed with this statement along with all three of the media specialists. Twenty-seven of the teachers agreed with this statement, and four were unsure.

Media Specialist as Information Specialist

There were eight questions that covered the role of the media specialist as the information specialist. Responses for this category are located in Table 2. Six of the eight statements in this category follow a pattern. These are statements 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. A majority of teachers agreed with the statements. The media specialists and the principals also agreed with the statements. These questions cover areas including research for students and teachers, resources for classrooms, and the promotion of reading.

Question seven in this category stated that the media specialist is the primary person responsible for the selection of all material for the media center. There were eight teachers who were unsure about this statement and eleven other teachers disagreed with this statement. The two principals disagreed with this statement. On the other hand, all three media specialists agreed with this statement. Principals may have considered the approval of the purchase orders used to select materials as taking away the primary

responsibility from the media specialist. All three media specialists shared in the interviews that teachers were expected to suggest books to purchase which would support the curriculum. This could account for the differences in the responses.

Statement seventeen involved the school materials selection policy. Seven teachers were unsure with this statement. Twenty-four teachers agreed with this statement while only four of the teachers disagreed with this statement. One principal agreed with this statement, and the other principal disagreed with this statement. One of the media specialists agreed with this statement but stated that she was not the media specialist when the policy was developed. Two of the media specialists disagreed with the statement. One of the media specialist stated she thought there was one in place, but she didn't know where it was or who was responsible for developing it.

Media Specialist as Instructional Consultant

The third role of the school media specialist centered on questions concerning the instructional consultant category. There were five questions that involved areas of curriculum. The questions were 2, 14, 15, 16, and 18. The chart outlining the responses for this category is located in Table 3. Teachers, principals, and media specialists were in agreement with questions 2, 14, and 15. These questions include the planning and managing of the school media program, assisting teachers in conducting research for classroom activities, developing programs with teachers, and developing library skills that are taught in context with classroom curriculum.

Question 16 stated, "The school media specialist assists teachers and students in the design and production of instructional materials." Thirteen teachers chose unsure for their response to this question. One principal agreed with the statement, and one principal chose unsure. The three media specialists disagreed with this statement.

Table 2

Media Specialist as Information Specialist

Questions	SA	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	SD	NA
Teachers' Responses (n = 35)						
Create read act	21	7	3	3	1	0
Sel all media	5	11	8	7	4	0
Class resources	19	9	4	0	2	1
Student research	19	9	4	1	2	0
Tchers research	20	10	1	2	1	0
Guides sel read mat	26	8	1	0	2	0
Adequate hrs	24	8	1	0	2	0
Dev sel policy	13	11	7	2	12	0
Principals' Responses (n = 2)						
Create read act	2	0	0	0	0	0
Sel all media	0	0	0	1	1	0
Class resources	1	1	0	0	0	0
Student research	1	1	0	0	0	0
Tchers research	1	1	0	0	0	0
Guides sel read mat	1	1	0	0	0	0
Adequate hrs	0	1	1	0	0	0
Dev sel policy	1	0	0	1	0	0

Table 2 (continued)

Media Specialist as Information Specialist

Questions	SA	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	SD	NA
Media Specialists' Responses (n = 3)						
Create read act	1	2	0	0	0	0
Sel all media	1	2	0	0	0	0
Class resources	2	1	0	0	0	0
Student research	0	3	0	0	0	0
Tchers research	1	2	0	0	0	0
Guides sel read mat	1	2	0	0	0	0
Adequate hrs	2	1	0	0	0	0
Dev sel policy	0	1	0	2	0	0

Question 18 stated, "The library media specialist works together with teachers and the principal to develop curriculum." Twenty-two teachers agreed with this statement, and 8 teachers chose unsure for this statement along with one of the principals. One principal agreed with this statement along with one of the media specialist. The two other media specialists disagreed with this statement. The media specialist who agreed with this statement is supervised by the principal who agreed. The other two media specialists stated in the interviews that they would like to be involved in curriculum, but at the present time have not been included in the process.

Table 3

Media Specialist as Instructional Consultant

Questions	SA	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	SD	NA
Teachers' Responses ($n = 35$)						
Plan, eval prog	24	7	4	0	0	0
Coop prog dev	18	7	5	3	2	0
Lib skills in cont	18	8	4	4	1	0
Design instr mat	10	6	13	4	2	0
Dev curr w tchers	14	8	8	3	2	0
Principals' Responses ($n = 2$)						
Plan, eval prog	2	0	0	0	0	0
Coop prog dev	2	0	0	0	0	0
Lib skills in cont	2	0	0	0	0	0
Design instr mat	0	1	1	0	0	0
Dev curr w tchers	1	0	1	0	0	0
Media Specialists' Responses ($n = 3$)						
Plan, eval prog	3	0	0	0	0	0
Coop prog dev	0	2	1	0	0	0
Lib skills in cont	0	2	0	0	1	0
Design instr mat	0	0	0	2	1	0
Dev curr w tchers	0	1	0	2	0	0

Media Specialist Role in Technology

This aspect of the role of the media specialist in technology is the most recent addition to the many-faceted job of the school media specialist. There were six questions in the survey that pertained to the areas covered by technology. The chart containing the responses to these questions is located in Table 4. Question 20 stated, "The media specialist is responsible for distributing all media equipment throughout the school." Twenty-four teachers agreed with this statement, and 8 teachers responded that they were unsure about this statement. Two of the media specialists agreed with this statement while one media specialist stated the assistant librarian/technology person was responsible for this role. Question 21 stated, "The library media specialist provides guidance in selecting and using computer-based materials." Twenty-four of the teachers agreed with this statement. One of the principals disagreed with this statement, and the other principal choose unsure with this statement. All three of the media specialists agreed with this statement. Question 23 stated, "The media specialist is responsible for recording video and audio programs, such as plays, programs, and speeches." Sixteen of the teachers agreed with this statement. There were seven teachers who were unsure of this statement. One principal agreed with this statement, and the other principal disagreed with this statement. Two of the media specialist agreed with this statement. The media specialist who disagreed with this statement stated that the assistant librarian/technology person was responsible for this role. Question 24 stated, "The media specialist is responsible for keeping updated on new educational technologies." One principal agreed with this statement, and the other principal disagreed with this statement. The three media specialists agreed with this statement. Twenty-eight of the thirty-five teachers who responded to the survey also agreed with this statement. This is the newest role of the school media specialist, so there are reasons for the questions surrounding this role.

Table 4

Media Specialist Role in Technology

Questions	SA	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	SD	NA
Teachers' Responses (n = 35)						
Dist all equip	13	11	8	1	2	0
Sel tv mat	12	14	1	5	3	0
Sel compter mat	10	14	6	1	4	0
Rec sch prog	3	13	7	9	3	0
Updated on tech	15	10	6	1	3	0
Instr new tech	16	12	2	3	2	0
Principals' Responses (n = 2)						
Dist all equip	2	0	0	0	0	0
Sel tv mat	1	1	0	0	0	0
Sel compter mat	0	0	1	1	0	0
Rec sch prog	0	1	0	1	0	0
Updated on tech	1	0	0	1	0	0
Instr new tech	0	1	1	0	0	0
Media Specialists' Responses (n = 3)						
Dist all equip	0	2	0	1	0	0
Sel tv mat	0	3	0	0	0	0
Sel computer prog	0	3	0	0	0	0
Rec sch prog	0	2	0	1	0	0
Updated on tech	0	3	0	0	0	0
Instr new tech	0	3	0	0	0	0

A question might also arise over what educational technologies the statement is referring to. There are many educational technologies that relate to the library. Some might feel other educational technologies might be left to the computer teacher or technology coordinator if the district has one.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to determine the role of the school library media specialist as perceived by teachers, principals, and media specialists. At the outset of the project the researcher believed there were different perceptions among the groups that were surveyed and interviewed. After the surveys were analyzed and the data tables assembled, the results as a whole do not show broad differences in the perceptions of the groups regarding the role of the school media specialist, although as a group the respondents are not in agreement with the different aspects of the role of the school media specialist.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the project was to determine if the role of the school media specialist was perceived differently by teachers, principals, and school media specialists. The project was conducted in two districts that were similar to each other. Three schools were included in the project. Teachers and principals were surveyed and school media specialists were interviewed using the same questions that were used with principals and teachers. The results of the surveys and interviews were analyzed. The responses of each group were compared to determine their perceptions of the school media specialist's role.

Conclusions

The project did answer the questions surrounding the perceived role of the school media specialist. Each role was expected to be performed by the school media specialist to some degree. Each role has many different facets. Although principals, teachers, and media specialists did not show consensus on every facet of the role, there were expectations in each role being fulfilled by the media specialists.

The project focused on two specific aspects that are part of the school media specialist role, the new role the media specialist fills in the area of technology and instructional consultant. Teachers, principals, and media specialists agreed for the most part that the media specialist is responsible for these areas.

A question did arise over the differences in responses. The differences were in the areas of library skills, in-service training, and selection of materials. Too many

teachers were unsure about whether the school media specialist taught all library skills. Two librarians did not provide in-service training, but a large number of teachers believed in-service training was provided. The other question to be answered is who selects the materials for the media center? There was a definite difference in the responses for this question.

In these three schools where the project took place, the media specialist does fill the role as outlined in the literature. These media specialists are perceived as information specialists, teachers, and instructional consultants. They are also perceived as being the person who should know the new technologies.

Recommendations

1. The school media specialists should provide in-service training at least once a year for all staff members.
2. A selection policy should be developed or updated by the current media specialist with the assistance and approval of teachers, principals and the board of education.
3. Teachers should be made aware of the necessity for teaching library skills across the curriculum not only by the media specialist but by classroom teachers.
4. The principal should be kept updated on a regular basis by the media specialist regarding all media center activities.

The implementation of these four recommendations would eliminate some of the confusion surrounding what the media specialist does in the media center. In-service training each year would give the media specialist an opportunity to keep the staff updated on all the activities in the media center. This in-service could establish a connection between the classroom and the media center.

Each district needs to develop an updated selection policy. This policy would eliminate the confusion over who is responsible for the selection of the media center material. Once the policy is created, it should be reviewed periodically. The policy should be made available to all staff.

As part of the in-service training, teachers should be encouraged to use the library across the curriculum. They should be informed of the importance of teaching information skills in context. The media specialists should make themselves available to all staff to help them create lesson that use information skills.

As stated in the study done in North Carolina which is cited in chapter two, “The media specialist is the main source of information about the activities that go on in the media center.” The principals rely on the media specialists to keep them informed. It is the responsibility of the school media specialist to keep the principal as well as parents and teachers informed about the activities in the media center. The media specialists could create a monthly newsletter that could be circulated among the staff. A monthly report could be forwarded to the principal to keep him informed about the activities the media specialist is involved in. According to Bell (1992), the media specialist must develop cooperative relationships with teachers and administrators. The results of the project show that this is necessary. School media specialists are expected to keep the dialogue going. They must use the in-service training and newsletters to keep administrators and staff informed.

The results of this project do not coincide with the results of the other projects that dealt with perceptions. Enough information about the participants of the other studies was not available. The articles did not detail whether the school media specialist was used to cover teachers’ preparation periods. This aspect could definitely change the perception of teachers and principals.

This project answered the question that was proposed at the beginning of the project. The media specialists in the two districts do fulfill the roles as outlined in the literature. If these four recommendations are implemented by the media specialist, another study could be conducted after all four recommendations had been implemented. It would be interesting to compare the results of the new study with the results in the current project. A study could be conducted that would investigate the perceptions of teachers, principals, and media specialists in schools where the media specialist covers teacher preparation periods. The results of that study could be compared to the results of this study.

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Appendix A

Letters

Letter to Superintendents

February 6, 1998

Dear _____ :

I am a graduate student in the School and Public Librarianship program at Rowan University. I would like your permission to survey the principals and some of the faculty of your district. I would also like to interview the school media specialist. These surveys would be used in connection with the completion of my thesis. The topic I have chosen is "The Role of the School Media Specialist as perceived by Principals, Teachers, and School Media Specialists."

In order to do my study, I need to survey the principals and teachers, and I need to interview the school media specialist after the principal- teacher surveys are completed. I am enclosing a copy of the survey. I would like to have the building principals randomly select teachers from across the grade levels. The teachers will not be identified in any way in the thesis, and they will remain completely anonymous.

In writing the thesis, the identification of the district and the schools will be withheld. The schools will be identified as Schools A, B, and C.

If agreeable, I would like to deliver the surveys on February 12th and pick them up on February 20th. Please feel free to make any comments. I can be reached at 822-2391 between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 4:00 P. M., Monday through Friday. My thesis advisor is Dr. Holly Willett; she can be reached at 256-4759.

Your response would be appreciated at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Gaskill

Cover Letter

February 1998

Dear Principals and Teachers:

I am doing a study on the on the role of the school media specialist as perceived by the principal and teachers for my thesis in School and Public Librarianship at Rowan University.

In order to complete this study, I would appreciate your help in answering the following survey as honestly as possible. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Please return this survey to your building principal by February 20, 1998. appreciate your time and participation in this study. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Gaskill

Library Media Specialist

Union Avenue School

Appendix B

The Role of the School Media Specialist as Perceived by Principals, Teachers, and School Media Specialists

by: Ronnie Gaskill, Library Media Specialist at Union Avenue School

Survey

Listed below are statements pertaining to responsibilities of the school library media specialist. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement in light of the way things are in your school media center. Please circle the number which best indicates your opinion on the following Likert scale scoring scheme:

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Moderately agree
- 3- Neutral on unsure
- 4- Moderately disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

		Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree		
1.	A major responsibility of the Library Media Specialist (LMS) is to teach library skills to students.	1	2	3	4	5	
2.	A responsibility of the LMS is to plan, manage and evaluate the school media program according to a long range plan.	1	2	3	4	5	
3.	The LMS rather than teachers, teaches all library skills.	1	2	3	4	5	
4.	In-service training for all teachers is given at least once a year by the LMS.	1	2	3	4	5	
5.	The LMS has some scheduled library/media classes and planned instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	
6.	The media center program provides planned activities for students that promote social and emotional growth creating positive attitudes about reading.	1	2	3	4	5	
7.	The LMS is the primary person responsible for selecting all materials for the media center collection.	1	2	3	4	5	

		Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
		1	2	3	4	5
8.	The LMS provides adequate materials for resource support of classroom activities.					
9.	The LMS helps students conduct research.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The LMS assist teachers in conducting research for their classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The LMS guides students and teachers in selecting appropriate reading materials.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The LMS provides adequate hours for staff and students to use the media center.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	The LMS provides instruction to teachers on audiovisual equipment.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Programs are developed cooperatively by the LMS and teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	The classroom teacher and the LMS develop library skills that are taught in context with classroom curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	The LMS assists teachers and students in the design and production of instructional materials.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	The LMS provides leadership in developing the school materials selection policy.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	The LMS works together with teachers and the principal to develop curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	The LMS attends all curriculum meetings in order to suggest appropriate learning materials.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	The LMS is responsible for distributing all media equipment throughout the school.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	The LMS assists teachers in selecting and using televised instructional materials.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	The LMS provides guidance in selecting and using computer based materials.	1	2	3	4	5

		Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
23.	The LMS is responsible for recording video and audio programs, such as plays, programs, and speeches.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	The LMS is responsible for keeping updated on new educational technologies.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	The LMS provides instruction on the use of new technology, such as laser disc players and digital cameras.	1	2	3	4	5

Personal Data

1. What grade do you teach? _____
2. What subject do you teach? _____
3. How long have you been teaching? _____
4. In your teacher education program was the use of the media center mentioned? Yes No
5. What is your highest level of education?
 - ☐ BA
 - ☐ Post baccalaureate teaching certification
 - ☐ Master's degree
 - ☐ Doctorate
 - ☐ Other _____
6. How often do you use the school media center for your own needs?
 - ☐ More than once a week
 - ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ 2-3 times per month
 - ☐ Once per month or less
7. How often do you take your class as a whole to the school library?
 - ☐ More than once a week
 - ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ 2-3 times per month
 - ☐ Once per month or less

8. How are your classes' library visits scheduled?
- ☐ Regular weekly visits on the same day and at the same time
 - ☐ I schedule visits as they are needed to support class work
 - ☐ I rarely take my class to the library
 - ☐ Other_____
9. How do your students use the school library? (check all that apply)
- ☐ To locate information for class assignments
 - ☐ For personal information needs
 - ☐ For pleasure reading
 - ☐ Other_____
10. How do you use the school library? (check all that apply)
- ☐ general professional development
 - ☐ support current classroom activities
 - ☐ personal information interests
 - ☐ pleasure reading
 - ☐ audio visual materials
 - ☐ professional help of advice from librarian
 - ☐ audio visual equipment
 - ☐ production of materials
 - ☐ Other_____

Appendix C

Table A

Principals' Response Chart

	Strong Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
Question 1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Question 2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Question 3	0	0	0	0	2	0
Question 4	0	0	1	1	0	0
Question 5	0	0	1	1	0	0
Question 6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Question 7	0	0	0	1	1	0
Question 8	1	1	0	0	0	0
Question 9	1	1	0	0	0	0
Question 10	1	1	0	0	0	0
Question 11	1	1	0	0	0	0
Question 12	0	1	1	0	0	0
Question 13	0	1	1	0	0	0
Question 14	2	0	0	0	0	0
Question 15	2	0	0	0	0	0
Question 16	0	1	1	0	0	0
Question 17	1	0	0	1	0	0
Question 18	1	0	1	0	0	0
Question 19	2	0	0	0	0	0
Question 20	2	0	0	0	0	0
Question 21	1	1	0	0	0	0
Question 22	0	0	1	1	0	0
Question 23	0	1	0	1	0	0
Question 24	1	0	0	1	0	0
Question 25	0	1	1	0	0	0

Table B

Teachers' Response Chart

	Strong Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
Question 1	15	10	5	3	2	0
Question 2	24	7	4	0	0	0
Question 3	3	9	9	11	3	0
Question 4	10	8	5	6	4	2
Question 5	18	9	2	4	2	0
Question 6	21	7	3	3	1	0
Question 7	5	11	8	7	4	0
Question 8	19	9	4	0	2	1
Question 9	19	9	4	1	2	0
Question 10	20	10	1	2	2	0
Question 11	26	5	1	2	1	0
Question 12	24	8	1	0	2	0
Question 13	16	11	4	3	1	0
Question 14	18	7	5	3	2	0
Question 15	18	8	4	4	1	0
Question 16	10	6	13	4	2	0
Question 17	13	11	7	2	2	0
Question 18	14	8	8	3	2	0
Question 19	11	5	9	6	2	2
Question 20	13	11	8	1	2	0
Question 21	12	14	1	5	3	0
Question 22	10	14	6	1	4	0
Question 23	3	13	7	9	3	0
Question 24	15	10	6	1	3	0
Question 25	16	12	2	3	2	0

Table C

Media Specialists' Response Chart

	Strong Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
Question 1	0	2	0	0	1	0
Question 2	3	0	0	0	0	0
Question 3	0	0	0	0	3	0
Question 4	1	0	0	2	0	0
Question 5	1	2	0	0	0	0
Question 6	1	2	0	0	0	0
Question 7	1	2	0	0	0	0
Question 8	2	1	0	0	0	0
Question 9	0	3	0	0	0	0
Question 10	1	2	0	0	0	0
Question 11	1	2	0	0	0	0
Question 12	2	1	0	0	0	0
Question 13	0	3	0	0	0	0
Question 14	0	2	1	0	0	0
Question 15	0	2	0	0	1	0
Question 16	0	0	0	2	1	0
Question 17	0	1	0	2	0	0
Question 18	0	1	0	2	0	0
Question 19	1	0	0	2	0	0
Question 20	0	2	0	1	0	0
Question 21	0	3	0	0	0	0
Question 22	0	3	0	0	0	0
Question 23	0	2	0	1	0	0
Question 24	0	3	0	0	0	0
Question 25	0	3	0	0	0	0

