Effective collaboration methods of school media specialists and classroom teachers

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EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION METHODS OF SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALISTS
AND CLASSROOM TEACHERS

by

CYNTHIA ANNE O’REILLY

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved by
Professor

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The purpose of this investigative study was to determine if student achievement was greater when media specialists and classroom teachers spent more time collaborating. This was accomplished by surveying media specialists and the classroom teachers they collaborated with. Surveys were mailed to media specialists in the Cherry Hill Public School District in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Those media specialists were asked to present a separate survey to classroom teachers they had collaborated with. Results of the surveys determined that 54% of media specialists and classroom teachers felt that their students achieved higher on lesson assessments when the media specialist and classroom teacher collaborated for less than 15 minutes. When media specialists and classroom teachers collaborated for more than 15 minutes, 87% felt that their students achieved higher on lesson assessments. This concluded that students were more likely to achieve higher on lesson assessments when the media specialists and classroom teachers spent more time collaborating.
DEDICATION

I want to first thank my husband Eric Rothman, my parents Sue and Dave O’Reilly, and all of my friends, especially Andrea Gleckler, for providing the support system I need to accomplish all of my goals. Without their patience and love I could not be the person I am today.

I also want to thank Mrs. Gloria Meekins for believing in me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF DATA</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF REFERENCES</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A MEDIA SPECIALIST COVER LETTER</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B MEDIA SPECIALIST SURVEY</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C TEACHER COVER LETTER</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D TEACHER SURVEY</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Employees other than Media Specialist ........................................27
Figure 2 Scenarios Practiced by Media Specialists ......................................29
Figure 3 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 1-Media Specialists ..........30
Figure 4 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 2-Media Specialists ..........31
Figure 5 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 3-Media Specialists ..........32
Figure 6 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 4-Media Specialists ..........33
Figure 7 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 5-Media Specialists ..........34
Figure 8 Practiced Scenario Helped Media Specialists Plan Information Literacy Lessons .................................................................35
Figure 9 Practiced Scenario Increased Student Achievement-Media Specialists ..36
Figure 10 Scenarios Practiced by Classroom Teachers ................................38
Figure 11 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 2-Teachers ....................39
Figure 12 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 3-Teachers ....................40
Figure 13 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 4-Teachers ....................41
Figure 14 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 5-Teachers ....................42
Figure 15 Practiced Scenario Helped Plan Lessons-Teachers ..........................43
Figure 16 Practiced Scenario Increased Student Achievement-Teacher ............44
Figure 17 Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenarios 1 or 2-Media Specialists & Teachers .................................................................47
Figure 18  Practicing Scenarios 1 or 2 Helped Students Achieve Higher on Lesson Assessments-Media Specialists & Teachers.................................48

Figure 19  Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenarios 3, 4, or 5-Media Specialists & Teachers .................................................................49

Figure 20  Practicing Scenarios 3, 4, or 5 Helped Students Achieve Higher on Lesson Assessments-Media Specialists & Teachers ....................50
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Problem

The role a media center plays in schools is critical to student success (Lance, 2002). Student achievement increases with the existence of a media center with instruction that is integrated into the curriculum. This integration occurs when the media center has a media specialist who is well versed in the school’s curriculum and who works collaboratively with classroom teachers. However it is not always possible for media specialists to collaborate with classroom teachers. With the onset of the federal No Child Left Behind Law, classroom teachers find themselves under enormous pressure (Youssef, 2005). Media specialists have trouble finding classroom teachers who are willing to collaborate with them (Capozzi, 2005). Media specialists are faced with the problem of finding ways to collaborate with classroom teachers who do not feel that they have the time or are able to collaborate. This study examined ways media specialists collaborated with classroom teachers and determined which method was the most beneficial to student achievement.

Rationale

Collaboration takes on many forms. A media specialist may walk past a classroom teacher in the hallway and ask, “What are you studying now?” The media specialist can then base his/her next information literacy lesson around the classroom teacher’s reply. Collaboration also takes place when a media specialist is present with a
classroom teacher as he/she is planning his/her classroom lessons. The media specialist can then offer suggestions of ways the media center can support the classroom lesson. Although both methods result in the media specialist planning information literacy lessons that coincide with what is being taught in the classroom, is one method more effective than the other? Does spending more time planning with the classroom teacher contribute to higher student achievement?

The answer to this question can help determine how collaboration between media specialists and classroom teachers can maximize student achievement. The results can be used by media specialists, classroom teachers and school administrators to guide collaboration practices within a school.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine if student achievement was greater when media specialists and classroom teachers spent more time collaborating. This was accomplished by surveying media specialists and the classroom teachers they collaborated with. Media specialists were asked to state specific ways they collaborated with classroom teachers, if any. The classroom teachers who collaborated with the media specialists were then asked if their students achieved higher when the media specialist was involved. The methods of collaboration media specialists used were compared with the levels of student achievement stated by the teachers to determine which method yielded the highest student achievement.

This study answered the following three questions by examining scenarios in which media specialists and classroom teachers collaborated: 1) How much time did media specialists and classroom teachers spend collaboratively planning? 2) Did student
achievement increase when media specialists and classroom teachers collaborated? 3) Did student achievement increase more if media specialists and classroom teachers spent more time collaboratively planning?

Hypothesis

It is theorized that successful lessons begin with good planning. The more time that is spent on planning a lesson, the better. Effective teachers spend long periods of time planning just one simple lesson (Robinson & Burris, 2005). Because of this, it should also hold true that the more time a media specialist spends planning with a classroom teacher, the higher the level of student achievement will be. The level of student achievement is positively related to the amount of time that a media specialist and a classroom teacher spend planning collaboratively.

Definitions

*Classroom lesson*

For the purpose of this study a classroom lesson is defined as a lesson planned by the classroom teacher that is taught in the classroom. A classroom lesson can be on any subject including, but not limited to math, language arts, science and social studies.

*Collaboration*

*World Book Online Reference Center* defines collaboration as “the act of working together” (2005). For the purpose of this study collaboration is the act of teachers and library media specialists in a school working together to plan lessons.

*Collaboration methods*

For the purpose of this study collaboration methods is defined as the ways in which media specialists work with classroom teachers to plan lessons. Media specialists
and classroom teachers were asked to describe their collaboration methods by selecting from five scenarios (see Media Specialist Survey in Appendix B and Classroom Teacher Survey in Appendix D).

**Classroom teacher**

For the purpose of this study a classroom teacher is defined as a certified teacher who teaches students in grades kindergarten through twelfth. The classroom teacher is not the school’s media specialist. The subject matter taught by the classroom teacher can vary and includes, but is not limited to math, language arts, science and social studies.

**Information literacy lesson**

Reitz’s *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* defines information literacy as

…skill in finding the information one needs, including an understanding of how libraries are organized, familiarity with the resources they provide (including information formats and automated search tools), and knowledge of commonly used research techniques. The concept also includes the skills required to critically evaluate information content and employ it effectively, as well as an understanding of the technological infrastructure on which information transmission is based, including its social, political, and cultural context and impact. (2005)

For the purpose of this study information literacy lesson refers to the lessons that media specialists teach so that students can acquire information literacy skills.
Media center

Reitz's *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* defines media center as being “a facility within an educational institution responsible for providing a full-range of media resources, equipment, and services, staffed to assist students and instructors in utilizing its collections, usually supervised by a media specialist” (2005). For the purpose of this study media center refers to only those facilities that are housed in kindergarten through twelfth grade schools in the Cherry Hill Public School District.

Media specialist

Reitz's *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* defines a media specialist as “A librarian or other individual with specialized training in the creation, selection, organization, maintenance, and provision of access to media of all kinds, who may also be responsible for supervising a media center or the media department of a library, including collections, equipment, and facilities for listening and/or viewing, and any service personnel” (2005). For the purpose of this study media specialist also refers to someone who has obtained a certification from the state of New Jersey as a School Media Specialist or an Associate School Media Specialist.

School administrator

For the purpose of this study a school administrator is defined as the person who serves as the curriculum supervisor for the classroom teachers and/or media specialists being studied. A school administrator may be, but is not limited to being a principal, assistant principal, or department head.
Student achievement

For the purpose of this study student achievement is defined as the grades and/or scores that a student receives as a result of teacher assigned specific lesson activities. The classroom teacher or the media specialist determines the ways the lesson is assessed to check for the students’ understanding of the lesson objectives. The assessment is part of the classroom or information literacy lesson.

Assumptions

It was assumed that survey participants answered questions honestly and accurately recollected their collaboration experiences. The study relied on media specialists providing the classroom teachers with whom they had collaborated a copy of the survey to fill out. It was assumed that the media specialists followed instructions and provided all teachers with whom they collaborated a copy of the survey to fill out instead of selecting only certain teachers to survey. A final assumption was that the respondents had consistent views of student achievement for any lesson. Grade level taught was not relevant to this study.

Limitations

This study was conducted in the Cherry Hill Public School District located in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. It is a kindergarten through twelfth grade school district. The district educates over 11,700 students housed in twelve elementary schools (grades kindergarten through five), three middle schools (grades six through eight), and two high schools (grades nine through twelve). The methods used in this study can be replicated in any kindergarten through twelfth grade school which contains a media center with a
certified media specialist. Results were limited to the Cherry Hill Public School District students and staff.
References


CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature to support the role of collaboration in the school media center was abundant. Professional librarianship journals regularly published articles on the importance of media centers, media specialists, and collaboration, and several studies were conducted to determine the effects of a school media center on a student’s education. A review of some research that was relevant to this study follows.

Media Center’s Role in Increasing Student Achievement

In his book, *What Works*, Ken Haycock stated that published research supported the conclusion that schools with media centers and professional media specialists performed better on standardized tests in the areas of reading comprehension and basic research skills (1992). In 2000 researchers Keith Curry Lance, Marcia J. Rodney, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell conducted a study to determine the effects a media center had on a student achievement. The study found that students’ scores on the reading portion of the Colorado Student Assessment Program, a form of a standardized test, increased when higher levels existed in the following areas:

- Library media specialist’s hours per 100 students
- Print volumes per student
- Periodical subscriptions per student
- Electronic reference titles per 100 students
The researchers concluded that the more that was put into creating and maintaining a media center, the more beneficial the media center was to the students.

The Lance, et al., 2000 study was a continuation of the study conducted by Lance in 1994 entitled “The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement”. The 2000 study served the purpose of determining if the results of the 1994 study held true six years later. The 2000 study yielded the same results as the 1994 study. The researchers of the 2000 study also aimed to focus “attention on the library media specialist and the service she or he provides throughout the building, rather than just the library media center as a specific place” and “it emphasizes the fact that better library media services lead to better student performance on standards-based tests” (Lance, et al., 2000, p. 13).

Smith’s study published in 2001 examined school libraries in Texas. Her study looked at 600 school libraries in Texas to “determine the impact that school libraries have on student performance as measured by the percent of students who met minimum expectations on the reading portion of the statewide standardized test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)” (Smith, 2001, p. 12). The results of the study recommended that schools with lower performance should “strive to increase their library resources and activities to levels maintained by the high performing schools” (Smith, 2001, p. 34). She suggested several ways to improve the media center. Her research indicated that improving the media center in the following ways would in turn increase student achievement:

- Increasing the number of print resources
- Increasing the amount of software for use by the students
• Increasing the number of magazine subscriptions
• Increasing the media center’s staff hours
• Increasing the number of hours that media specialists spend planning collaboratively with teachers
• Increasing the number of hours the media specialists spend providing staff development to the teachers of the school
• Increasing the number of hours that media specialists spend directly instructing students on information literacy skills (Smith, 2001, p. 34).

Using these suggestions a media center could improve student achievement on standardized tests when the media center had appropriate resources. One of the most important resources that the media center needed was a certified media specialist. By recommending that schools increase the amount of time that media specialists spend collaborating with teachers, providing staff development and spending more time teaching students, Smith’s study showed that a media center was more than just a place (Smith, 2001).

Because of the findings of researchers like Lance, et al., school administrators were encouraged to embrace the media center and put it to work to increase student achievement. In 2002 the Educational Resources Information Center published an article by Gary Hartzell which was written for school administrators. Hartzell’s article stated “principals should support school libraries because it is in both their students’ and their own best interests to do so. Quality library media programs can enhance student achievement, and informed, committed librarians can help principals enhance their own administrative practice” (Hartzell, 2002, p. 1-2).
The results of these studies pointed to the conclusion that having a well developed media center was vital to students’ academic success in school.

**Media Specialist’s Role in Increasing Student Achievement**

Having a media center is not enough. The media center needs a media specialist who can guide both students and teachers on how to utilize the media center’s resources efficiently and effectively. Smith’s study found “higher TAAS performance at all educational levels in schools with librarians than in schools without librarians” (Smith, 2001, p. 13). The Lance, et al., 2000 study stated that “consistently, at both elementary and middle school levels, students in tested grades are more likely to be reading at grade level if their schools have adequately staffed library media programs” (Lance, et al., 2000, p. 40). The researchers stated that “one of the most consistent findings of research about the impact of library media centers was the value of staffing them with individuals who are professionally trained for the job. Another consistent finding in past research was the importance of having support staff who free the professional to do his/her job.” (Lance, et. al, 2000, p. 30).

However research also showed that in some schools professional media specialists were not being used to their potential. Smith’s study indicated that “professional librarians expend the greatest portion of their time on basic library services that may be performed by library aides (paraprofessionals)” (2001, p. 17). In order for the media specialist to positively impact a student’s education, he/she must be freed of clerical responsibilities so that his/her time can be spent collaborating with teachers and working directly with the students. Having a media specialist working the media center is not
The media specialist must use more of his/her time collaborating with teachers, not performing clerical tasks.

Importance of Collaboration

In order to increase student achievement research indicates that a media center needs to exist and that the media center needs to be properly staffed with a certified media specialist as well as support staff. It is the job of the support staff to handle the clerical duties of operating the media center, which then allows the media specialist time to collaborate with classroom teachers. According to researcher Keith Curry Lance, collaboration between the media specialist and the classroom teachers should include:

- identifying useful materials and information for teachers,
- planning instruction cooperatively with teachers,
- providing in-service training to teachers, and
- teaching students both with classroom teachers and independently (2002, p. 77).

When these collaborative techniques were in place, students’ scores on reading portions of standardized tests were higher (Lance, 2002, p. 77).

Professional librarianship journals and magazines often contain articles which stressed the importance of collaboration between media specialists and classroom teachers. *The Book Report* published an article in 1999 written by Lesley S. J. Farmer, then an associate professor at California State University. Farmer stated that “both the teacher and the library media specialist can be more effective if they work together ahead of time to design instructional and learning experiences” (¶ 5). In 2005, *Knowledge Quest* published an article by Peter Milbury, a high school media specialist. His article stressed the importance of collaboration. He listed 10 reasons why media specialists and
classroom teachers should collaborate. The reasons included to increase student achievement, to reinforce the important role of the media specialist as an educational leader, and to ensure that “ethical use of information is integrated into instruction” (Milbury, 2005, p. 31). Milbury summarized collaboration as “a powerful experience and one of the most important services that school library media specialists have to offer” (2005, p. 31).

Media specialists were not the only ones who believed that collaboration works. *Library Media Connection* published an article in 2005 written by Jennifer L. Youssef, a sixth grade social studies teacher. Youssef designed a project for her students which incorporated the teaching expertise of an English teacher and the school’s media specialist. When talking about the project, Youssef stated “working collaboratively with other classroom teachers and the library media specialist can transform a tedious assignment into an exciting, memorable project” (2005, p. 41).

An article in *The Book Report* discussed another collaborative project between a classroom teacher and the school media specialist. The article stated that the classroom teacher attempted the project in the past without collaborating with the media specialist and found that the students were not very successful. The media specialist and the classroom teacher decided to plan the project together the next time the classroom teacher attempted to teach it. The project was so successful that year that the classroom teacher encouraged other teachers in her school to work collaboratively with the media specialist (Farmer, 2001, p. 6-7).
Challenges of Collaboration

Even though collaboration was proven to be extremely successful in improving student achievement, there were a number of teachers and media specialists who did not collaborate. Why? Kelley said this was because collaboration was “complex, painfully difficult, and requires one to understand a range of human emotions that inevitably constrains effective collaboration” (2005, p. 30). He said that the key to effective collaboration was trust. He talked about trust and collaboration by saying the following:

Most of us perform collaboration to some degree, but we are guarded in how much information we share and what knowledge we impart to others.

Employees…are retained and rewarded for their expertise and intellectual value. Parting with our data, information, and knowledge, therefore, is a double-edged sword. We have to communicate and contribute to the organization’s work processes and associated teams, yet we want to ensure that we will remain valuable over the long term. In order to achieve even a modest increase in collaboration between employees, the culture of the organization must be supportive. Trust, simply put, is a requirement of collaboration. (2005, p. 31)

Educators need to trust one another as well as their administrators. Administrators need to encourage collaboration by first building trust amongst the educators. Also educators need to put aside their personal pride and think of the research that asserts the benefits of collaboration on student achievement.

Another challenge identified was when media specialists think that teachers will come to them to collaborate. Media specialists need to advertise the benefits of the media center and the ways in which they can improve student achievement. In her article
published in *The Book Report*, Marianne Fitzgerald called herself the “lonely librarian” (2002, p. 33). She said:

Day after day, period after period, I worked in the media center, cataloging materials, ordering, shelving and looking online for information for teachers. I could not understand why, except for teachers bringing their classes in to do research, I was not working hand in hand with teachers to bring lessons to life in the library. Being a new media specialist, I thought that perhaps I was too naïve and that collaboration did not really happen. The few times I ventured into the hallways of our homogenous school, the other teachers were pleasant enough. But I realized that while I recognized many faces, I did not know many names. I was the lonely librarian. (2002, p. 33)

Fitzgerald reflected on why she was lonely. She realized that the “only way for the media center to become the hustling hub of the school is for the media specialist to ‘sell it’. The only way to do that is, ironically, to leave the media center and get involved” (2002, p. 33).

*Teacher Librarian* published an article in 2004 which talked about the importance of the media specialist having a flexible personality. (Brown, 2004, p. 13-18) The media specialist must be able to work collaboratively with a large number of people throughout the school, and he/she cannot allow his/her attitude to get in the way.

Another challenge identified was the classroom teachers who do not always wish to collaborate. Colleen K. Capozzi, a media specialist, worked hard to encourage classroom teachers to work collaboratively with her. Unfortunately the first eight classroom teachers she approached with the idea turned her down. She kept at it though
and eventually found someone willing to work with her (Capozzi, 2005, p. 38-39).

Collaboration requires patience and resilience on the part of the media specialist.

Importance of Lesson Planning

"Lesson planning is a critical part of effective teaching" (Beginning Educator Handbook, 1994, p. 16). The more time that a teacher spends planning a lesson, the more successful the lesson will be in enabling the students to reach the goals of the lesson. In their article published in 2005, Shane Robinson and Scott Burris discussed the importance of lesson planning. They said that in order for instruction to be effective, a teacher must first create an effective plan for what he/she is going to teach. In 2000 Lowell E. Hedges wrote a paper for new teachers that offered advice on how to be an effective teacher. The paper spent a great deal of time explaining how to create effective lesson plans (Hedges, 2000, p. 12-24).

Summary

All of the discussed literature points to the same conclusion. If a school wanted to improve student achievement, one certain way was to improve the school’s media center. A media center impacted student achievement in a positive way when it had a certified media specialist. The media center also needs support staff who are able to perform the clerical duties necessary for the media center’s everyday operation. A media specialist is most effective in improving student achievement when he/she works collaboratively with teachers.

Overcoming these challenges is necessary to improve student achievement. Collaboration between the media specialist and the classroom teacher is essential.
This study determined if the more time a media specialist spent planning lessons with a teacher affected student achievement. Research said that collaboration was important to increase student achievement and so was planning. Therefore it should hold true that the more time a media specialist spent collaboratively planning with a classroom teacher, the higher the level of student achievement will be.
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Lance, K. C. (October 2002). What research tells us about the importance of school libraries. Supplement to Teacher Librarian, 30, 76-78.


CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Overall Research Design and Justification

This study was conducted using an exploratory survey research method. Exploratory surveys “can increase the researcher’s familiarity with the phenomenon in question” (Powell & Connaway, 2004, p. 85). The phenomenon researched was the importance of the ways in which media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate, and the effects that those collaboration methods had on student achievement. There are several types of exploratory surveys. This study used experience surveys. The goal of an experience survey is to gain insight into the relationship between two variables (Powell & Connaway, 2004, p. 85). This study looked at two ways in which media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate to determine which method was more effective in increasing student achievement. The results were based on the experiences of a selected group of media specialists and the classroom teachers with whom they worked.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine if student achievement was greater when media specialists and classroom teachers spent more time collaborating. This was accomplished by surveying media specialists and the classroom teachers they collaborated with. Media specialists were asked to state specific ways they collaborated with classroom teachers. The classroom teachers who collaborated with the media specialists were then asked if their students achieved higher when the media specialist
was involved. The methods of collaboration media specialists used were compared with the levels of student achievement to determine which method yielded the highest student achievement.

This study answered the following three questions by examining scenarios in which media specialists and classroom teachers collaborated: 1) How much time did media specialists and classroom teachers spend collaboratively planning? 2) Did student achievement increase when media specialists and classroom teachers collaborated? 3) Did student achievement increase more if media specialists and classroom teachers spent more time collaboratively planning?

Population and Sample

The Cherry Hill Public School District was purposefully selected as the sample of this study. The Cherry Hill Public School District located in Cherry Hill, New Jersey consisted of 17 schools, all of which employed one or more certified media specialist. Of the 17 schools, two were high schools, three were middle schools, and twelve were elementary schools. This district was selected because it educated over 11,700 students in grades kindergarten through twelfth, and because all of the media specialists in the Cherry Hill Public School District were familiar with the results of the Keith Curry Lance, et al., studies that documented the benefits of media specialist and classroom teacher collaboration (1994 & 2000). Because of this knowledge, the Cherry Hill Public School District media specialists regularly collaborated with classroom teachers. This study examined two ways in which the media specialists and classroom teachers collaborated in order to determine which way had a more positive effect on student achievement.
Variables

This study investigated media specialist and classroom teacher collaboration. The dependent variable for this study was the measurement of student achievement. One independent variable was that media specialists and classroom teachers spent varying amounts of time collaborating. Another independent variable was the level of certification of the media specialist. The media specialist either had the associate media specialist certification or the full library media specialist certification. A third independent variable was the subject and grade level that the classroom teacher taught. A final independent variable was the number of staff members or volunteers who worked in the library media center.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected by first surveying media specialists in the Cherry Hill Public School District in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Cover letters and surveys were interschool mailed to seventeen media specialists (see Appendices A, B, C, D). Those media specialists were asked to answer questions about collaboration with classroom teachers based on their past collaborative experiences (see Media Specialist Survey in Appendix B). They were asked how long they spent with classroom teachers collaboratively planning, and to describe how collaborating with the classroom teacher impacted their ability to plan information literacy lessons that correlated with the lesson/project that the classroom teacher was teaching. Responding media specialists were then asked to present a second cover letter (see Appendix C) and survey (see Appendix D) to at least five classroom teachers with whom they collaborated. These classroom teachers were asked to describe the impact that the media specialist’s role in
the lesson/project had on student achievement for that lesson/project. All surveys were returned to the researcher via interschool mail.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability of this study was ensured by pre-testing the surveys that were used. The surveys were pre-tested by media specialists and classroom teachers who did not work in the Cherry Hill Public School District. These media specialists and classroom teachers were asked to verify that the surveys were fair and that they asked for information for the sole purpose of this study. Changes were made based on feedback from the pretest participants.

Results of this study were valid for students and staff in the Cherry Hill Public School District. The study was able to be replicated in any school district with a certified media specialists who collaborates with kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers.

Validity was also ensured by informing the survey participants that their responses would remain anonymous.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Design Implementation

A total of 17 media specialists and 110 classroom teachers in the Cherry Hill Public School District were surveyed on their collaboration methods. A total of 13 of the 17 media specialists returned the surveys for a 76% return rate. Of the 110 classroom teachers surveyed, 56 returned the surveys making the return rate 51%. The overall return rate for both groups surveyed was 54%, which was sufficient for this type of research. The responses from both sets of surveys were input into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Presentation of Media Specialist Survey Results

Media specialists were asked to complete the “Media Specialist Survey” (see Appendix B). The first two questions asked the media specialists to tell if their media center had volunteers or paid employees who helped with clerical tasks. All 13 of the respondents stated that their media center utilized volunteers to assist with clerical tasks.

Figure 1 shows that eight of the 13 respondents, or 62% stated that their media centers did not employ other staff who were responsible for assisting with clerical tasks. Figure 1 also shows that five media centers did have paid employees, two of which (15%) were full-time and three (23%) were part-time.
The media specialists were then given five collaboration scenarios. They were asked to use these scenarios to answer the remaining four questions of the survey. The scenarios used were:

**Scenario 1:** I don’t actually communicate with the classroom teachers. I find out what they are teaching from the students, from other staff members, or by reading their plans on my own. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.
Scenario 2: I use email or written correspondence to find out what the classroom teachers are teaching. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.

Scenario 3: I sit in with the classroom teachers while they are planning so I can find out what they are teaching. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.

Scenario 4: I sit in with the classroom teachers while they are planning so I can find out what they are teaching. Together the teacher and I come up with information literacy lessons that will best benefit the students.

Scenario 5: The classroom teachers and I plan our lessons together (both information literacy lessons and the classroom lessons).

The media specialists were asked to indicate which of the scenarios they practiced in their schools. Some of the media specialists practiced more than one scenario. Five respondents indicated that they practiced scenario 1, twelve practiced scenario 2, six practiced scenario 3, five practiced scenario 4, and four practiced scenario 5. These results are displayed in Figure 2.
The media specialists were then asked to indicate how much time on average they spent on each of the collaboration methods that they practiced. Figure 3 shows that of the five media specialists who practiced scenario 1, three spent 0 to 5 minutes and one spent 6 to 15 minutes. The other respondent who practiced scenario 1 did not give a response to this question.
Figure 3
n=5

Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 1-Media Specialists

Figure 4 shows that of the twelve media specialists who practiced scenario 2, five spent 0 to 5 minutes, five spent 6 to 15 minutes, and two spent 16 to 25 minutes.
Figure 4
n=12

Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 2-Media Specialists

Figure 5 shows that of the six media specialists who practiced scenario 3, two spent 6 to 15 minutes, three spent 16 to 25 minutes, and one spent 25 to 30+ minutes.
Figure 5
n=6

Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 3-Media Specialists

Figure 6 shows that of the five media specialists who practiced scenario 4, three spent 16 to 25 minutes and two spent 25 to 30+ minutes.
Figure 6  
n=5  

Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 4-Media Specialists

Figure 7 shows that of the four media specialists who practiced scenario 5, one person spent 6 to 15 minutes, one spent 16 to 25 minutes, and two spent 25 to 30+ minutes.
The media specialists then reported the collaboration methods that they practiced and whether or not those methods made it easier for them to plan their information literacy lessons. Some media specialists selected more than one response. Figure 8 shows that of the five media specialists who practiced scenario 1, three (60%) said that it was easier to plan their information literacy lessons; of the twelve who practiced scenario 2, four (33%) said it was easier; of the six who practiced scenario 3, four (67%) said it was easier; of the five who practiced scenario 4, five (100%) said it was easier; and of the four who practiced scenario 5, three (75%) said it was easier.
The media specialists were then asked to report about the collaboration methods that they practiced and whether or not they believed those methods produced an increase in student achievement. Some media specialists selected more than one response. Figure 9 shows that of the five media specialists who practiced scenario 1, one (20%) said that it produced an increase in student achievement; of the twelve who practiced scenario 2, five (42%) said it produced an increase; of the six who practiced scenario 3, one (17%) said it produced an increase; of the five who practiced scenario 4, five (100%) said it produced an increase; and of the four who practiced scenario 5, three (75%) said it produced an increase.
Presentation of Classroom Teacher Survey Results

Classroom teachers were asked to complete the “Classroom Teacher Survey” (see Appendix D). The first two questions asked the classroom teachers to state indicate the grade level(s) and subject(s) they taught. The 56 respondents represented classroom teachers in all grades kindergarten through twelfth. Subject matter taught by the respondents included art (1), elementary classroom teacher (28), English (4), home economics (1), foreign language (2), health (2), history (1), humanities (3), language arts (1), music (1), science (5), social studies (6), and special education (1).

The classroom teachers were also given five collaboration scenarios. They were asked to use these scenarios to answer the remaining four questions on the survey. The scenarios used were:
Scenario 1: I do not collaborate with the media specialist.

Scenario 2: I use email or written correspondence to tell the media specialist about the topic or project my students are working on.

Scenario 3: The media specialist sits with me while I am planning so he/she can find out what I am teaching. The media specialist then plans information literacy lessons on his/her own.

Scenario 4: The media specialist sits with me while I am planning so he/she can find out what I am teaching. Together the media specialist and I come up with information literacy lessons that will best benefit the students.

Scenario 5: The media specialist and I plan our lessons together (both information literacy lessons and classroom lessons).

The classroom teachers were asked to indicate which of the scenarios they practiced in their schools. Some of the classroom teachers practiced more than one scenario. Three respondents indicated that they practiced scenario 1, which meant that they did not collaborate with the media specialist. A total of 37 respondents indicated that they practiced scenario 2, 30 practiced scenario 3, 26 practiced scenario 4, and 13 practiced scenario 5. These results are displayed in Figure 10.
The classroom teachers were then asked to indicate how much time on average they spent on each of the collaboration scenarios 2, 3, 4, and 5 that they practiced. Figure 11 shows that of the 37 classroom teachers who practiced scenario 2, 14 spent 0 to 5 minutes; 18 spent 6 to 15 minutes; three spent 16 to 25 minutes; and one spent 25 to 30+ minutes. One respondent did not give a response to this question.
Figure 11
n=37

Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 2-Teachers

Figure 12 shows that of the 30 classroom teachers who practiced scenario 3, one spent 0 to 5 minutes, ten spent 6 to 15 minutes, ten spent 16 to 25 minutes, and nine spent 25 to 30+ minutes.
Figure 13 shows that of the 26 classroom teachers who practiced scenario 4, six spent 6 to 15 minutes, eleven spent 16 to 25 minutes, and eight spent 25 to 30+ minutes. One respondent did not answer this question.
Figure 13
n=26

Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenario 4-Teachers

Figure 14 shows that of the 13 classroom teachers who practiced scenario 5, one spent 0 to 5 minutes, five spent 6 to 15 minutes, one spent 16 to 25 minutes, and six spent 25 to 30+ minutes.
The classroom teachers were then asked to think about the collaboration methods that they practiced and whether or not those methods made it easier for them to plan their lessons. Some classroom teachers selected more than one response. Figure 15 shows that of the 37 classroom teachers who practiced scenario 2, 23 (62%) said that it was easier to plan their information literacy lessons; of the 30 who practiced scenario 3, 27 (90%) said it was easier; of the 26 who practiced scenario 4, 23 (88%) said it was easier; and of the 13 who practiced scenario 5, 12 (92%) said it was easier.
The classroom teachers were next asked to think about the collaboration methods that they practiced and whether or not those methods produced an increase in student achievement on the lesson objectives. Some classroom teachers selected more than one response. Figure 16 shows that of the 37 classroom teachers who practiced scenario 2, 18 (49%) said that it produced an increase in student achievement; of the 30 who practiced scenario 3, 27 (90%) said it produced an increase; of the 26 who practiced scenario 4, 26 (100%) said it produced an increase; and of the 13 who practiced scenario 5, 11 (85%) said it produced an increase.
Summary

Data for this study were collected by surveying media specialists and classroom teachers employed by the Cherry Hill Public School District during the 2005-2006 school year. Respondents consisted of 13 media specialists and 56 classroom teachers in grades kindergarten through twelfth. Media specialists and classroom teachers were given separate surveys to complete. Surveys remained anonymous. Data were analyzed by creating charts and graphs using Microsoft Excel.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if the amount of time that media specialists and classroom teachers spent collaborating had an affect on student achievement on lesson objectives. Of the 17 media specialists surveyed, 13 returned the surveys; and of the 110 classroom teachers surveyed, 56 returned the surveys. The data were tallied and analyzed to determine how much time media specialists and classroom teachers spent collaborating and whether student achievement increased when more time was spent. The results were presented in graphs using Microsoft Excel.

The survey gave media specialists five collaboration scenarios and asked them to determine which ones best described their collaboration practices. The scenarios were:

Scenario 1: I don't actually communicate with the classroom teachers. I find out what they are teaching from the students, from other staff members, or by reading their plans on my own. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.

Scenario 2: I use email or written correspondence to find out what the classroom teachers are teaching. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.
**Scenario 3:** I sit in with the classroom teachers while they are planning so I can find out what they are teaching. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.

**Scenario 4:** I sit in with the classroom teachers while they are planning so I can find out what they are teaching. Together the teacher and I come up with information literacy lessons that will best benefit the students.

**Scenario 5:** The classroom teachers and I plan our lessons together (both information literacy lessons and the classroom lessons).

Another survey for classroom teachers gave them five collaboration scenarios and also asked them to determine which ones best described their collaboration practices. There scenarios were:

**Scenario 1:** I do not collaborate with the media specialist.

**Scenario 2:** I use email or written correspondence to tell the media specialist about the topic or project my students are working on.

**Scenario 3:** The media specialist sits with me while I am planning so he/she can find out what I am teaching. The media specialist then plans information literacy lessons on his/her own.

**Scenario 4:** The media specialist sits with me while I am planning so he/she can find out what I am teaching. Together the media specialist and I come up with information literacy lessons that will best benefit the students.

**Scenario 5:** The media specialist and I plan our lessons together (both information literacy lessons and classroom lessons).
Figure 17 shows that of the media specialists and classroom teachers who indicated that they used scenarios one or two, 85% spent less than 15 minutes collaborating. One respondent did not provide an answer as to how long he/she spent collaborating.

Figure 17

![Time Spent Collaborating Using Scenarios 1 or 2 - Media Specialists & Teachers]

Figure 18 shows that a total of 54% of the media specialists and classroom teachers who practiced scenarios one or two felt that these methods of collaborating helped their students achieve higher grades on lesson assessments.
Figure 18

Practicing Scenarios 1 or 2 Helped Students Achieve Higher on Lesson Assessments - Media Specialists & Teachers

No Effect on Students, 46%
Helped Students, 54%

Figure 19 shows that a total of 68% of the media specialists and classroom teachers who practiced scenarios three, four, and five indicated that they collaborated for more than 15 minutes.
Figure 20 shows that of the media specialists and classroom teachers who practiced scenarios three, four, or five, 87% felt that their students achieved higher grades on their lesson assessments.
According to this data, collaborating using scenarios three, four, or five required more time than collaborating using scenarios one or two. This data also showed that more media specialists and classroom teachers felt that their students achieved higher on lesson assessments when they collaborated using scenarios three, four, or five. Therefore the more time media specialists and classroom teachers spent collaborating, the more likely it was that student achievement would increase.

Conclusions

Results of this study indicated that students did achieve higher on lesson objectives when media specialists and classroom teachers spent more than 15 minutes collaborating on a lesson. This concludes the hypothesis that students achieve higher
when media specialists and classroom teachers spend more time collaborating. When classroom teachers made use of the media specialist’s knowledge of information literacy, student achievement was directly benefited. On the other hand, media specialists were able to plan information literacy lessons that were more useful to the students when they understood what the classroom teacher’s lesson objectives were.

Possible Uses of Results

The results of this study could help media specialists and classroom teachers to request the time they need to collaborate from administration. It is often hard for media specialists and classroom teachers to find time to collaborate. Knowing that collaborating can help increase student achievement can encourage media specialists, classroom teachers, and school administrators to find the time.

Also media specialists who have a hard time convincing classroom teachers that spending the time to collaborate will make their jobs easier, can use the results of this study to encourage collaboration. Classroom teachers are often too busy to collaborate with the media specialist, but they may be more willing to give it a try if they know that it can increase their students’ achievement.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study could be replicated in school districts that have professional media specialists. Further studies could be done to determine how collaboration between media specialists and classroom teachers affects student achievement on standardized tests. Another suggestion for further study could be to determine how media specialist involvement in a school affects students desire to read independently.
LIST OF REFERENCES


52


53
APPENDIX A

MEDIA SPECIALIST COVER LETTER
Dear Library Media Specialist:

To fulfill requirements of the School Librarianship Master’s Program at Rowan University, I am in the process of writing a thesis under the direction of Dr. Marilyn L. Shontz. My thesis explores the ways in which school library media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate.

Research shows that students are able to achieve higher when school library media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate to plan their lessons. There are several ways in which this collaboration can take place. This survey explores five ways that school library media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate in order to determine which ones produce the highest levels of student achievement.

Please respond to the enclosed short survey. It should take you less than 15 minutes. Please return it to me (Cindy O’Reilly, Cooper School) via interschool mail by February 14, 2006.

My research also requires feedback from classroom teachers. Enclosed are five copies of my classroom teacher survey and a cover letter for the classroom teachers. In order to keep the results of the surveys anonymous, I am asking you to please hand them to classroom teachers with whom you collaborate. If you require additional copies, please let me know and I will send you more.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at coreilly@chclc.org or Dr. Shontz at shontz@rowan.edu. After compiling the results of my research, I will share them with anyone who requests.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Cindy O’Reilly
James F. Cooper Elementary School
coreilly@chclc.org
Media Specialist Survey

1. Does your library utilize volunteers to assist with clerical tasks?
   Yes No

2. Does your library staff include paid assistants to assist with clerical tasks?
   Yes, Full-time Yes, Part-time No

Use the following collaboration scenarios to answer the 4 questions below:

Scenario 1: I don't actually communicate with the classroom teachers. I find out what they are teaching from the students, from other staff members, or by reading their plans on my own. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.

Scenario 2: I use email or written correspondence to find out what the classroom teachers are teaching. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.

Scenario 3: I sit in with classroom teachers while they are planning so I can find out what they are teaching. I then plan information literacy lessons for their students on my own.

Scenario 4: I sit in with the classroom teachers while they are planning so I can find out what they are teaching. Together the teacher and I come up with information literacy lessons that will best benefit the students.

Scenario 5: The classroom teachers and I plan our lessons together (both information literacy lessons and the classroom lessons).
Media Specialist Survey Questions:

1. Which scenario(s) do you use in your school to collaborate with classroom teachers? (Check all that apply.)

- Scenario 1
- Scenario 2
- Scenario 3
- Scenario 4
- Scenario 5

2. For each scenario please circle the amount of time (on average) that both you and the classroom teacher spend collaboratively planning for a lesson and/or project. If you do not collaborate using the scenario, please circle N/A for not applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>0-5 minutes</th>
<th>6-15 minutes</th>
<th>16-25 minutes</th>
<th>25-30+ minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1</td>
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<td>0-5 minutes</td>
<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 2</td>
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<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scenario 3</td>
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<td>0-5 minutes</td>
<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 4</td>
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<td>0-5 minutes</td>
<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0-5 minutes</td>
<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Of the scenarios that you practice, which one(s) make it easiest for you to plan information literacy lessons that will best benefit your students? Please check all that apply.

- Scenario 1
- Scenario 2
- Scenario 3
- Scenario 4
- Scenario 5

4. Of the scenarios that you practice, which one(s) produce the highest levels of student achievement on your assessments for your information literacy lessons? Please check all that apply.

- Scenario 1
- Scenario 2
- Scenario 3
- Scenario 4
- Scenario 5
APPENDIX C

TEACHER COVER LETTER
Dear Classroom teacher:

To fulfill requirements of the School Librarianship Master’s Program at Rowan University, I am in the process of writing a thesis under the direction of Dr. Marilyn L. Shontz. My thesis explores the ways in which school library media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate.

Research shows that students are able to achieve higher when school library media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate to plan their lessons. There are several ways in which this collaboration can take place. This survey explores five ways that school library media specialists and classroom teachers collaborate in order to determine which ones produce the highest levels of student achievement.

Please respond to the enclosed short survey. It should take you less than 15 minutes. Please return it to me (Cindy O’Reilly, Cooper School) via interschool mail by February 14, 2006.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at coreilly@chclc.org or Dr. Shontz at shontz@rowan.edu. After compiling the results of my research, I will share them with anyone who requests.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Cindy O’Reilly
James F. Cooper Elementary School
coreilly@chclc.org
Teacher Survey

1. What grade(s) do you teach?

2. What subject(s) do you teach?

Use the following collaboration scenarios to answer the 4 questions below:

Scenario 1: I do not collaborate with the media specialist.

Scenario 2: I use email or written correspondence to tell the media specialist about the topic or project my students are working on.

Scenario 3: The media specialist sits with me while I am planning so he/she can find out what I am teaching. The media specialist then plans information literacy lessons on his/her own.

Scenario 4: The media specialist sits with me while I am planning so he/she can find out what I am teaching. Together the media specialist and I come up with information literacy lessons that will best benefit the students.

Scenario 5: The media specialist and I plan our lessons together (both information literacy lessons and the classroom lessons).
Teacher Survey Questions:

1. Which scenario(s) do you use in your school to collaborate with the media specialist? (Check all that apply.)

   - Scenario 1
   - Scenario 2
   - Scenario 3
   - Scenario 4
   - Scenario 5

2. For each scenario please circle the amount of time (on average) that both you and the media specialist spend collaboratively planning for a lesson and/or project. If you do not collaborate using the scenario, please circle N/A for not applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>0-5 minutes</th>
<th>6-15 minutes</th>
<th>16-25 minutes</th>
<th>25-30+ minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 3</td>
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<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 4</td>
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<td>0-5 minutes</td>
<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0-5 minutes</td>
<td>6-15 minutes</td>
<td>16-25 minutes</td>
<td>25-30+ minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Of the scenarios that you practice, which one(s) make it easiest for you to plan lessons that will best benefit your students? Please check all that apply.

   - Scenario 1
   - Scenario 2
   - Scenario 3
   - Scenario 4
   - Scenario 5

4. Of the scenarios that you practice, which one(s) produce the highest levels on student achievement on your assessments for your lessons and/or projects? Please check all that apply.

   - Scenario 1
   - Scenario 2
   - Scenario 3
   - Scenario 4
   - Scenario 5