MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES

by

Kristin D. Deering

An Abstract
of a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science and Information Services in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development University of Central Missouri

August, 2015
ABSTRACT

by

Kristin D. Deering

School librarians have many roles. Collaboration and working with teachers to design integrated lessons and units is one of them. However, when working from a fixed schedule in elementary school libraries, time presents a challenge. Flexible Scheduling allows librarians time and opportunity to plan, teach, and assess lessons and units with teachers, work more closely with students, and become the instructional partner that is required of them. Transitioning to a flexible schedule is not easy, and presents many challenges. Communication and flexibility are attributes of librarians in successful school libraries. It is up to the librarian to communicate the many benefits of a flexible schedule and be able to collaborate effectively with teachers and staff.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limitation of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</strong></td>
<td>Background of Library Scheduling and Collaboration</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library Scheduling</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits of a Flexible Schedule</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making the Transition to a Flexible Schedule</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideas and Tips for Collaboration</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning with Teachers</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lessons</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

School libraries are an ever-changing place for learning in elementary schools. Many elementary school libraries operate under a fixed schedule where the librarian meets with students during a regularly scheduled time each week. However, there is a need for time for school librarians to collaborate with teachers on units of study. One way to provide students, as well as teachers, more time in the library is to make the switch to a flexible schedule. Students can come to the library freely, and teachers and librarians are provided the time needed to collaborate and plan more meaningful lessons for deeper student learning.

According to Browne, Stevens, and Burton, flexibility provides time for patrons to visit the school library whenever library skills can be used for a lesson or class project (20). Classes may also utilize the library more often. When teachers and librarians can collaborate on lessons, the library is available for multiple lessons in one week. Other classes may not visit as frequently, but may at another time. This allows teachers and librarians to capitalize on the momentum of lessons, rather than waiting a week to continue (21).

Lance, Rodney, and Pennell’s research (1993) suggests student achievement increases when libraries operate under a flexible schedule. Teachers also have more opportunities to collaborate with school librarians. According to Haycock, collaborating with teachers is the most effective professional behavior of librarians on student achievement (32). According to Gavigan, Pribesh, and Dickenson’s research, students check out more books when the library implements a flexible schedule (135).

Van Deusen suggests several conditions must be met for successful flexible scheduling implementation in a library; information skills curriculum aligned to content area curriculum,
team planning, collaboration expectations from principals and other administrators, and commitment to resource-based learning (qtd. in McGregor, “Implementing” 12). McGregor found principal support to be critical to the success when changing from fixed to flexible scheduling in school libraries (17). Pappas suggests beginning collaboration with a few willing teachers and creating lessons that show what a flexible schedule can do for other teachers as well as students (37).

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite position statements from the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and researchers in the library field, fixed scheduling remains the primary type of schedule used in elementary schools (Hurley 37). School librarians do not have sufficient time to spend on collaboration with teachers, and in turn, students are not given the best instruction possible during their time in the library. Moving to a flexible schedule is a challenge, and many school librarians are afraid they will not have the support needed to complete the transition. However, when evidence is reported to stakeholders, the transition can be made more smoothly. Librarians are challenged with advocating for a schedule that allows them to provide the best instruction and support to teachers, staff, and most importantly students.

**Purpose of the Study**

This research study is a review of the literature and research in the area of flexible scheduling in elementary school libraries. The goal of this study to provide school librarians with the information and evidence needed to make the transition to a flexible schedule in the school library. With this information, librarians will be able to support the use of a flexible schedule with research and data to school principals and teachers. This study also reviews the literature regarding the challenge librarians face in making the transition to flexible scheduling.
The goal is to give school librarians background from other professionals in the field as well as how to initiate collaboration in the library to improve student achievement. It is one of the many roles of the school librarian to maximize the benefits of flexible scheduling in elementary school libraries.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the correlation between a flexible schedule and collaboration in the library?
2. What are the benefits of utilizing a flexible schedule in school libraries?
3. What are the steps in transitioning to a flexible schedule?

**Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of the study include the availability of peer-reviewed journal articles regarding flexible scheduling in elementary school libraries and the limited time frame available for this study. Not many elementary school libraries have transitioned from fixed scheduling to flexible scheduling. The scope of this study included journals and articles dealing with flexible scheduling and collaboration in elementary school libraries. Therefore, the results found in the study cannot be generalized to all school library instruction, but rather serves as an analysis of instruction in elementary school libraries that operate on a flexible schedule.

**Definition of Terms**

American Association of School Libraries (AASL) – A division of the American Library Association. The AASL is a professional membership organization that serves school librarians.

Collaboration – Refers to the relationship between teachers and the school librarian when working together to plan, teach, and assess a lesson or unit.
Combination schedule – A type of school library schedule where students sometimes visit the library on a routinely designated day and time and sometimes visit based on need and activity.

Fixed schedule – A type of school library schedule where students visit the library on a routinely designated day and time.

Flexible schedule – A type of school library schedule where students visit the library based upon need and activities planned in coordination between teachers and librarians.

Special area rotation – Classes such as Art, Music, Physical Education that are visited by students one or two times per week on a fixed rotation schedule.

**Research Design**

This research presents a review of journal articles and other published information about maximizing the benefits of flexible scheduling in elementary school libraries. This is a review of the literature and is descriptive in nature rather than a research study. This research describes the facts and opinions of experts and professionals in the field of librarianship. Guiding questions were answered based on the review of existing literature and research which addressed flexible scheduling. At no time was there an effort to create new research or to re-examine existing data, privately or publicly held that would require permission.

Journal articles were collected through databases available on the J.C. Kirkpatrick Library (JCKL). Those articles led the researcher to additional online information that would compliment the study. Articles were retrieved from the following databases: *Academic Search Elite*, *ProQuest*, *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text*, *Library Literature & Information Science Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*, *Academic Search Complete*, and

This study includes three chapters on how school librarians maximize the benefits of a flexible schedule in elementary school libraries. Chapter one is an introduction. Chapter two is a review of the literature, and chapter three contains information related to recommendations, answers to questions posed in chapter one, and a conclusion.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to Judi Moreillon, “A fixed schedule has many inherent difficulties and a flexible schedule is a better foundation for an environment in which deep learning can occur” (26). However, many elementary schools, the base of a student’s education, are operating on fixed scheduling. Lance’s research finds that students perform better academically in schools where the librarian participates in planning and teaching with the classroom teachers (“Impact” 29). Flexible schedules in elementary school libraries provide the time and opportunity for teachers and librarians to collaborate and develop meaningful lessons for students. Once the library transitions to a flexible schedule, the planning and collaboration process can begin.

The first section of the review of literature will focus on the background of library scheduling and collaboration. The paper will explain the differences in fixed, flexible, and combination scheduling as defined by Van Deusen and Creighton; examine advantages and disadvantages of the different types of schedules, as well as common characteristics of each in school libraries; and will end with a brief history of fixed and flexible scheduling according to Van Deusen. Because a flexibly scheduled library system cannot function well without collaboration with teachers, the research continues by reviewing Montiel-Overall’s four models of teacher librarian collaboration (TLC). This section will also describe the common phases of collaboration between teachers and school librarians.

The second section of the review will focus on implementation of flexible scheduling in elementary school libraries. The paper will review the benefits of flexible scheduling, including research findings from various case studies on student achievement, library circulation, and collaboration among librarians and teachers, as well as how flexible scheduling impacts librarian involvement in school curriculum development. This section includes a look at the steps a
librarian and staff take to implement a successful flexible library schedule. The success of such a task relies on not only the school librarian but the building principal as well as faculty and staff. Teamwork and patience are keys to a successful transition from fixed to flexible scheduling.

The third section of the review of literature will look more closely at collaboration to make the most of a flexible schedule. The section will give helpful ideas and tips from top librarians and researchers in the field. Every school will take a different approach and have a separate need for flexible scheduling, but collaboration is the centerpiece of a successful program. A brief description of lessons will end the third section.

**Background of Library Scheduling and Collaboration.**

This section of the review of the literature will begin with information regarding the background of library scheduling and collaboration. First, the section will describe the three types of scheduling: fixed, flexible, and combination. Each type of schedule provides different levels of access for teachers and students in the school. Each type incorporates collaboration in different ways. Montiel-Overall’s levels of collaboration are briefly reviewed next, including how these levels of collaboration can be incorporated into a library program operating on a flexible schedule. Collaboration is the foundation for successfully working in a flexibly scheduled library.

**Library Scheduling**

According to author Jean Donham Van Deusen, fixed and flexible scheduling are the two prevalent scheduling patterns in elementary school libraries (1). Combination scheduling, suggested by Peggy Creighton, is a third model (“Just How” 12). Fixed, flexible, and combination scheduling vary in the degree of collaboration between the teacher and librarian,
frequency of student visits, as well as library media center availability (Creighton, “Just How” 10; Harvey 18) (see figure 1).

With a fixed schedule classes visit the library at a designated day and time to receive instruction. Fixed scheduling offers administrative advantages that include a simple design, accountability for the school librarian, and ensures all students visit the library routinely (Van Deusen 2). With this type of schedule, the classroom teacher is generally not present, and students often are not able to come to the library throughout the week for more library materials (Harvey 18).

Fixed scheduling began in the 1960’s during the time of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Van Deusen 5). Elementary administrators at this time thought of the library as a classroom to be filled with students, and this led to fixed scheduling (5). This caused school librarians to be considered a “special area” teacher, and class times fell into the daily rotation with other special areas along with art, music, and physical education to allow planning time for classroom teachers (6).

According to Creighton, a flexible schedule does not allow the library media center to close for other activities or be scheduled regularly for classes (“Just How” 10). In a library that utilizes a flexible schedule, classes come to the library based on instructional needs. Flexible scheduling requires continuous communication between the school librarian and classroom teachers. With this system, it is more difficult to provide accountability of the librarian’s time and use of the library facilities. It requires open access to the library with students visiting with a class or independently. This can create difficulties with overlap and overcrowding in the library (2).
Some libraries utilize a modified flexible schedule that is a combination of fixed and flexible scheduling in elementary school libraries. This situation can be effective as long as there is sufficient time over consecutive days to allow for engagement with resources and the expertise of the librarian to provide an environment in which deep learning can occur (Moreillon 26).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduling Characteristics</th>
<th>Fixed</th>
<th>Flexible</th>
<th>Combination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schedule</td>
<td>Classes only at a routinely designated day and time</td>
<td>Classes or individuals based upon class activities</td>
<td>Some classes scheduled by activity, others regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of LMC</td>
<td>Only available for scheduled class</td>
<td>Available when needed by class or individual students</td>
<td>Sometimes available, sometimes not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Visits</td>
<td>On a set schedule, often weekly</td>
<td>As often as necessary to complete instruction; Students come as needed throughout the day</td>
<td>Some classes come once per week or more, others not at all. Students may come with passes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Planning</td>
<td>Instruction not necessarily related to curriculum or planned collaboratively</td>
<td>Instruction involves collaborative efforts</td>
<td>Some instruction is planned collaboratively or is related to subject area curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Characteristics of Flexible, Fixed, and Combination Scheduling (Creighton, “Just How” 10)
Collaboration

Collaboration, in the broadest sense of the term, can be defined as working together toward a common goal. In this paper, collaboration will refer to the relationship between teachers and the school librarian when working together to plan, teach and assess a lesson or unit. Collaboration can happen in a professional setting among teachers, teachers and librarians; librarians and administrators; and students. They can collaborate in the classroom, the library, or both.

Patricia Montiel-Overall suggests there are four models of teacher and librarian collaboration (“Toward a Model” 38). Model A refers to coordination, model B refers to cooperation, model C refers to integrated instruction, and model D refers to an integrated curriculum. Each model involves varying levels of involvement, expectations, and attributes (41). Because models A and B require minimal communication and involve independent planning and goal setting among participants, they are the easiest of the four models to achieve in a school setting. Models C and D require more communication between participants and are less commonly reached. In these two models, a relationship evolves among participants over time as teachers and the school librarian jointly plan, implement, and assess instruction (45). According to Montiel-Overall, the high levels of collaboration, as found in models C and D, can be difficult to reach for these reasons. Adequate resources, such as time; an environment conducive to collaboration; and attributes needed to build relationships are all required to make collaboration successful at the higher levels (49).

Researchers suggest that time is one of the most frequently cited resources needed for successful collaboration in the school library (Haycock 31; Montiel-Overall, “Toward a Model” 49). High levels of collaboration require teachers and school librarians to engage in shared
planning and integrated instruction ("Toward a Model" 48). Haycock emphasizes the need for
the building administrator to provide flexible scheduling in the library to provide time for
teachers and librarians to reach such levels of collaboration (31).

An environment that supports collaboration includes frequent interaction among faculty
members, as well as a place where colleagues support each other’s views (Montiel-Overall,
"Toward a Model" 49). When this type of environment is present, it is more likely that
collaboration becomes an opportunity for negotiation, and a give and take relationship between
teachers and librarians. These conditions appear to improve collaborative relationships and help
to build trust (50).

To reach the deeper levels of collaboration, collaborative relationships require certain
characteristics. These attributes include trust, respect, reciprocity, collegiality, and propensity to
share (Montiel-Overall, "Toward a Model" 50). Trust and respect in collaborative partnerships
develop over time and become deeper with successful collaboration. Reciprocity occurs when
collaborators are willing to put forth equal amounts of effort and responsibility. Models C and D
require teachers and librarians to learn from each other and see each other as equals (50).
Successful collaborators are also able to share a vision, goals, objectives, information, and more.
The propensity to share develops over time as collaboration evolves in the library (51).

**Implementation**

Flexible scheduling in an elementary school library has many benefits (AASL; Browne,
Stevens, and Burton 20-21; Creighton, "Just How" 12; Haycock 25, 29, 32; Lance, “Leave no
Child Behind” 5; Medaille 65; Van Deusen 55-57, 63). Research suggests students are not the
only patrons of the library to benefit from flexible scheduling (Van Deusen 55-57, 63). This
section will explain how librarians’ involvement in academic planning relates to student
achievement. This section also describes the transition from fixed to flexible scheduling, and how to successfully implement a more flexible schedule in the elementary school library.

**Benefits of a Flexible Schedule**

There are many benefits to implementing a flexible schedule in school libraries; these include the integration of library skills with what is being taught in the classroom, spontaneity of instruction, more individual and small group utilization of the media center, and increased opportunity to learn about resources and technologies of schools. These benefits are the result of shared planning and collaboration with teachers (Browne, Stevens, and Burton 21).

In 2011, the American Association of School Libraries (AASL) adopted the following position statement regarding flexible scheduling:

> The integrated library program philosophy requires an open schedule that includes flexible and equitable access to physical and virtual collections for staff and students. Classes must be flexibly scheduled into the library on an as needed basis to facilitate just-in-time research, training, and utilization of technology with the guidance of the teacher who is the subject specialist, and the librarian who is the information process specialist. . . . Students and teachers must be able to come to the library throughout the day to use information sources, read for pleasure, and collaborate with other students and teachers.

According to Browne, Stevens, and Burton, the term ‘flexible’ not only describes a less restrictive schedule for the media center but may apply to other areas of the school librarian’s role. The authors suggest that a freer schedule allows students to access the library for independent study as well as the librarian to work with individuals and small groups (20). The librarian will also be able to become more involved in curriculum development, and thus find
ways to integrate the library program into each grade level’s prescribed coursework (Browne, Stevens and Burton 21).

Time is a reported barrier to successful collaboration; a flexible schedule allows librarians to devote more time to planning and working with teachers (Russell 35). According to Russell’s research librarians operating on a fixed schedule spend up to five minutes planning with teachers while those on a flexible schedule spend more than thirty minutes (35). Flexible schedules also allow librarians to develop four and one-half times more integrated units than those on a fixed schedule, and they can integrate more skills lessons into classroom instruction (36). Shannon states that it is impossible for elementary schools to utilize the full potential of an integrated library media program without the implementation of a flexible schedule (3).

Joy McGregor makes note of the benefit of using teachable moments when operating on a flexible schedule (“Innovation” 2). Teachers and librarians are more available on this type of schedule to use the momentum of repeating sessions to conduct inquiry-based instruction. Students are more engaged when participating in inquiry-based lessons, and waiting for a week for a scheduled visit to continue a lesson can be counterproductive (3). Elementary librarians who recognize the need for continuous access to materials are likely to view the library as an extension of the classroom (McGregor, “Innovation” 3). In addition, not all research can be conducted in a forty-five minute block; teachers and librarians are able to plan lessons and research time according to student needs (Stripling 650).

Although there is not much research found on student test scores due to a lack of elementary schools that are on a flexible schedule, student achievement is noted to increase when libraries function this way. According to research by Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell (1993), a study in Colorado found that student performance on achievement tests increased when
library visits were not limited to a regularly scheduled time (qtd. in Creighton, “Just How” 12). A flexible schedule allows for more collaboration between the teacher and librarian and collaborating with teachers is the most effective professional behavior of librarians on student achievement (Haycock 32). When participating in collaboratively planned lessons, students are more creative, involved in their learning and are influenced to learn to share ideas (Haycock 25).

Students are not the only patrons of the school library to see benefits from a freer schedule. Teachers have more opportunity to plan and collaborate with librarians when a flexible schedule is in place. The school librarian has a working knowledge of curriculum development and is familiar with all of the curriculum taught in the school. Lance states that students perform better academically when the librarian is a part of a planning and teaching team with the classroom teachers (“Impact” 29).

According to Montiel-Overall, collaborating to share knowledge and materials can maximize use of time, materials, and expertise (“Further Understanding” 33). In a study by Miller and Schontz (1999), 45% of librarians utilizing flexible scheduling reported that they plan with more than 71% of the teachers in their schools, as opposed to 29% of librarians operating on a combination schedule, and 13% of librarians planning with teachers using a fixed schedule (Creighton, “Just How” 12). According to Haycock’s 2007 research, “librarians in schools with flexible or mixed schedules develop significantly more [lesson] units than those on fixed schedules by a ratio of 4:1” (29).

A correlation was noted between flexible scheduling and the librarian’s involvement in curriculum development. In schools that implement a flexible schedule, the librarian was more involved with curriculum planning; however, when flexible scheduling was combined with team planning, all curriculum involvement variables increased (Van Deusen 56-57). These variables
include gathering instructional resources, designing instructional objectives, planning activities, team teaching, and evaluating instruction (55-56). The combination of flexible scheduling and team planning also had a substantial impact on the integration of library skills in lessons. Flexible scheduling frees up the librarian to teach skills when they best-fit classroom needs (63).

In research conducted by Gavigan, Pribesh, and Dickenson (2010) it was found that scheduling in the library has an impact on library circulation as well. The research found that of the 88 elementary schools surveyed, 33 were on fixed schedules, 44 had a combination schedule, and 11 school libraries utilized a flexible schedule. Student book check-out averages per year differed within the schedule types. Students in schools with fixed scheduling averaged 51 books checked out per year. Schools with combination scheduling saw students check out an average of 46 books per year. However, students in schools with flexible scheduling averaged 71 books checked out per year (135). The research suggests students are likely to check out more books per year when school libraries operate on a flexible schedule (Medaille 65).

**Making the Transition to a Flexible Schedule**

Despite position statements from AASL and researchers in the library field, fixed scheduling remains the primary type of schedule used in elementary schools. According to McCracken’s research (1999), 53.9% of elementary schools utilize a fixed schedule in their libraries; this is compared to 7.9% of elementary schools using a flexible schedule, and 38.2% using a combination schedule. It is also noted in the same research that secondary schools operate with 48.6% of middle schools and 84.2% of high schools on a flexible schedule. The majority of the rest (46.6% and 12.5% respectfully) utilize a combination schedule (Hurley 37).

Changing from a fixed schedule to a flexible one will have challenges for not only the librarian, but also teachers, students, and administrators. Browne, Stevens, and Burton suggest
the first year is the hardest when transitioning from fixed to flexible scheduling. There is more work to be done in the area of planning, scheduling, and curriculum development (23). Van Deusen suggests several conditions must be met for successful flexible scheduling implementation in a library; information skills curriculum aligned to content area curriculum, team planning, collaboration expectations from principals and other administrators, and commitment to resource-based learning (qtd.in McGregor, “Implementing” 12).

McGregor’s case study examined six elementary schools that received no funding as an incentive or to support the implementation of a flexible schedule. The research found that flexible scheduling was used as a tool to achieve other curricular objectives. Stakeholders, such as teachers and administrators, are educated on not just the schedule but the library program itself, and what is planned to be gained through implementation (‘Implementing” 11). McGregor also found that principal support was critical to the success of changing from fixed to flexible scheduling (17).

Another case study by McGregor looks more closely at the role principals and administrators play in the implementation of flexible scheduling. Principals in the elementary schools were interviewed to find their view on their role in the implementation of a flexible schedule. Some principals felt they had a minor role in the development; however, others thought they held a leadership or partnership role in making flexible scheduling possible in their schools. These principals described themselves as advocates, supporters, communicators, promoters, and enablers. In continuing with the flexible scheduling in years to come, the principals perceived their role would be to continue monitoring the library and making sure students received the access they needed. All principals interviewed credited the librarians for success in the implementation of flexible scheduling (“How Does a Principal” 78).
Some authors suggest the transition from fixed to flexible scheduling can be smoother by beginning with a combination schedule. Donnelly suggests that this method of implementation allows the librarian to work on collaboration first and then move toward a flexible schedule (“Building” 16). Once the collaboration process is in full force, teachers will see a need for flexible scheduling and begin to value the benefits of a freer schedule (Donnelly, “Collaborating” 36-37).

Pappas suggests librarians should aggressively approach a select group of teachers with whom to collaboratively plan lessons. These lessons can be used to show other teachers what the librarian-teacher team can accomplish and how collaboration can benefit teachers as well as students (37). Pappas also suggests on-site visits to other schools that have successfully implemented flexible scheduling where the building principal and selected groups of teachers accompany the librarian. Once the flexible schedule has been piloted, growth and expansion are expected (37).

A responsibility of the librarian is always to be in communication with the principal and teachers as to how the program is evolving (Pappas 37). Because a flexible schedule changes day to day, the librarian seeks out other means of communication to teachers, staff, and students. Librarians still have the role of informing teachers and students of new books, changes in procedure, events, etc. Utilizing bulletin boards, school announcement systems, or adding to the school publication or newsletter are ways to reach library patrons (Browne, Stevens, and Burton 21). When evidence of success is communicated to administrators, teachers, and the community, those involved develop a sense of ownership (Pappas 37).

Librarians and administrators will decide when and how to make the transition to a flexible schedule for reasons specific to the library and building (McGregor, “Innovation” 17).
In McGregor’s case study, some of the six elementary schools moved to flexible scheduling due to district mandate, to increase curriculum integration and resource-based learning. The school librarians in the other schools in the study approached the administrators about the idea based on need. In both circumstances, the school librarians were convinced of the worth of a flexible schedule.

When creating a flexible schedule for the elementary school library, Fox suggests keeping students’ developmentally appropriate needs in mind (10). It is appropriate to have a designated time in the daily schedule for primary grades (K-2) to come to the library specifically for book check-out. Older grade levels (3-6) read longer books and may only come to the library in smaller groups once per week. Fox reminds librarians that access to the library for individual check-out remain open for all students. These suggestions may only apply to class groups (K-2) or small groups of older students (11).

**Ideas and Tips for Collaboration**

In a successful program, school librarians are mindful of the time used to collaborate with teachers and use this time in an efficient manner (Needham 10). This section of the review of the literature discusses lesson ideas and helpful ideas for librarians to gain knowledge of the curriculum to make the best use of time spent collaborating. Teachers are encouraged to provide input about lesson units for collaboration before the planning begins.

**Planning with Teachers**

Collaboration takes time. Often, teachers are afraid to give up their time to plan a lesson with the school librarian if they have never collaborated before. To get teachers on board with collaboration, Joyce Needham recommends that a foundation be laid. The librarian first shares the knowledge and resources available through collaboration by working with interested teachers.
Planning with teachers becomes easier as they realize the time spent means another professional is sharing goals and responsibilities for preparing students to meet standards and objectives.

Needham also suggests the use of a planning guide in elementary schools. This gives teachers the opportunity to fill out a planning form each month. The form may also be completed by a team of teachers. On the form, there is an area for teachers and teams to write the name of an upcoming unit or standard to be taught, including concepts and the date of the next assessment for each content area. The teachers then record vocabulary terms they would like to see addressed in the library to ensure common language throughout teaching the unit. A separate optional section allows for the teacher to write down any technology or information literacy skills necessary, as well as materials from the media center that teachers and students may find helpful throughout the unit. Needham points out that the form can also be shared with the teachers of other special area classes such as art, music, physical education, counselors, speech, or special needs classrooms (12-13), who can suggest ways to enrich instruction.

During planning time with teachers, Andria Donnelly recommends taking generous notes on the needs of the teachers. Donnelly then turns her notes into a lesson plan that outlines goals and responsibilities throughout the lesson or unit. Included in the lesson plan are state content area and library standards, materials needed by both the teacher and librarian, as well as assessment plans. For collaboration to be successful, teachers always have a responsibility in the lesson ("Building" 15).

A first step to making planning with teachers a success is for the school librarian to develop collaborative personality traits (Creighton, "Flexible Scheduling" 26). McGregor (2006) states that school librarians who have successfully implemented a flexible schedule show the
following characteristics: “...flexibility, energy, a sharing and facilitating mindset, competence, persistence, awareness of national trends and best practices, a sense of humor, enthusiasm, and an ability to deal with many different kinds of people…” (qtd. in Creighton, “Flexible Scheduling” 26). David Loertscher and Blanche Woolls examine the importance of the partnership between classroom teachers and school librarians. When team teaching is common practice, both professionals are given the opportunity to utilize individual strengths, and in turn provide improved learning experiences for students (7).

When planning with teachers, Ohlrich reminds librarians there is a schedule involved in flexible scheduling. Successful collaboration includes being aware of the curriculum time frame for grade levels in buildings, and the school and district’s calendar, including quarterly dates and holidays. The librarian’s planning times, lunch, and extra duties are also considered when the librarian and teachers are scheduling and planning (36). A flexible schedule does not mean that nothing is scheduled; students and teachers simply have access to the library for research-based lessons at times deemed appropriate for learning (Stripling 650).

Lessons

When planning lessons with classroom teachers, librarians can “rework” lessons previously taught. Lessons can be adapted and changed to better fit the classroom or library curriculum. For example information literacy is taught in a way that weaves these skills into content area topics and objectives. Librarians and teachers may need to rewrite an introduction or gather different materials for a collaborative lesson; however the skills and standards addressed may remain the same (Ohlrich 36).

Steck and Padget provide an example of a lesson for collaboratively teaching about ecosystems in fifth grade. To prepare for the lesson, the teacher and librarian meet to discuss
common goals and objectives relating to the science curriculum as well as information literacy standards (36). Because the library functions on a flexible schedule, the class is scheduled for three consecutive days in the library for research on a chosen ecosystem. With the librarian, students began with a review of research skills: note-taking, search strategies, and bibliographic entries. Then they select a topic related to ecosystems. The librarian encourages students to use both print and non-print resources. Once information is gathered, students sharing the same topic can join together for the culminating project (36). In this scenario, the teacher and librarian are not the only collaborators. Students see the professionals working together cohesively and can model the behavior in their own collaborative research groups.

Integrated lessons do not have to be confined to older grades, however. Ellen Jay describes a collaborative lesson developed for kindergarten students, called “Write from the Start”. In this year-long initiative, students came to the library for scheduled book circulation and story-time activities, but the teacher and librarian also collaborated on ways to involve and introduce the kindergarteners to technology tools in the computer lab. The librarian taught students how to use technology to interact with information while modeling for teachers how to use technology to enhance classroom material (Jay 52).

After the first semester, students became more knowledgeable of the technology as well as more proficient in the areas of reading and writing. The teachers and librarian met and decided to adapt the schedule to fit student needs. Students no longer came to the library to return books on a fixed schedule but were encouraged to do so individually, more fitting to a flexible schedule. The teachers and librarian used the extra time gained this way to create smaller groups of students and focus on individual language and library skills to fit their needs (Jay 53).
Conclusion

Flexible schedules in elementary school libraries require more than the dedication of the school librarian; the faculty and staff in the building are involved. Collaboration is at the center of a fully flexible schedule and can occur in many ways. To successfully implement a flexible library program, librarians first build trust and create a steady line of communication with teachers and administrators.

A flexible schedule allows for collaboration in the elementary school library, without depleting student access to books and library usage. Implementation of a flexible schedule can be confusing and stressful. However, the library becomes available for collaboration with teachers and class activities. It also opens up individual access for students to come and go as needed. The librarian and teacher can teach content as well as research skills, note-taking, and other important information literacy standards using the freer schedule. A flexible schedule allows for constant library usage by faculty as well as students.
CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A library’s schedule sets the tone for the entire library program. Working on a fixed schedule sets limits for students and staff members that may otherwise utilize the library more frequently. Flexible scheduling allows the librarian to work with teachers to provide deeper learning opportunities for students. This chapter will answer the three questions posed in chapter 1: “What is the correlation between a flexible schedule and collaboration in the library?”, “What are the benefits of utilizing a flexible schedule?”, and “What are the steps in transitioning to a flexible schedule?”

Flexible Scheduling and Collaboration

Flexible scheduling and collaboration between elementary school librarians and classroom teachers go hand in hand. When working from a flexible schedule, librarians and teachers have more time and opportunity to plan meaningful lessons for students. Because a flexible schedule opens up a librarian’s schedule, the librarian is free to schedule lessons with teachers, or set up times to collaborate. The AASL advocates the use of a flexible schedule and acknowledges the importance of collaboration in integrated school library programs.

Without collaboration between librarians and teachers, there would not be a need for flexible scheduling. If elementary school teachers or librarians are not willing to collaborate, a fixed schedule might be more appropriate for the library program. However, with a fixed schedule, students are not exposed as often, if at all, to the deep learning opportunities that collaboration offers. Both librarians and teachers hold a responsibility in creating lessons that produce deep learning. Research shows that librarians that operate on a flexible schedule plan more with teachers, as well as build more units that integrate library curriculum with other content areas than those operating on a fixed library schedule.
Benefits of a Flexible Schedule

Flexible scheduling offers many benefits to elementary school librarians, teachers, and school administration, as well as students. Librarians can collaborate with teachers and integrate library curriculum into lessons to aid in meeting content area standards as expected and set forth by school and district administrators. Librarians also can be more involved in curriculum development and become more knowledgeable of grade level standards and expectations across the curriculum.

School librarians have more opportunities to collaborate and plan units with classroom teachers when operating on a flexible schedule. Compared to a fixed schedule, librarians plan with teachers six times more, and develop more than four times as many collaborative lessons or units with teachers, and integrate more library and technology skills into the content area curriculum. Both teachers and librarians can use the momentum of “teachable moments” to continue lessons and not worry about waiting a week to return to the library for the next scheduled lesson.

Students also benefit from a flexibly scheduled library program. Because of the time allowed for teacher and library collaboration, in-depth inquiry-based lessons are created. Students have an opportunity for deeper understanding through such lessons, thus increasing performance in the classroom. They are exposed to lessons in a more logical sequence than with a fixed schedule. Instead of spreading a lesson out over the course of a few weeks, meeting once per week, the lessons can be scheduled over consecutive days. This allows natural momentum throughout a lesson to occur and avoids students losing interest or information.

Student performance is shown to improve when a school library utilizes a flexible schedule, as does book circulation. With a fixed schedule students are guaranteed to check out
books weekly, or at the frequency allowed by the rotation. However, when operating under a flexible schedule, the library is open for students to come as needed for materials. Many libraries with flexible schedules have times specified for book check-out and also allow students to come with permission from the classroom teacher throughout the school day.

**Making the Transition to a Flexible Schedule**

Transitioning to a flexible schedule takes time, patience, and the support of teachers and administration. Many times the need for a flexible schedule comes from an increase in collaboration efforts between elementary school teachers and the school librarian. Once planning begins and the team attempts to schedule lessons, a need is recognized for a more flexible schedule.

When beginning the transition to a flexible schedule, the librarian first makes contact with the administrator. The librarian presents the need and informs the administrator with research to support a freer schedule. Next, the librarian begins the collaboration process with willing teachers to demonstrate to others what integrated lessons can look like and do for students. Throughout the process, the librarian is building trusting relationships with teachers. This is a key factor in making the transition to flexible scheduling. If teachers are no longer visiting on a routine schedule, they may be uneasy about giving up other class times to collaborate. Once successful collaboration is seen, more teachers are likely to request time to plan for their own classrooms.

Another key factor in transitioning to a flexible schedule is communication. Since librarians may not see teachers or classes on a routine basis, other lines of communication may need to be utilized. Librarians may use e-mail, web-based newsletters, bulletin boards, or other means necessary to communicate what is happening within the library to teachers, students, and
administrators. The more teachers and students are aware of what the library offers, the more lessons will be planned, and resources used.
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