This study investigated elementary teacher perceptions of school library programs in two different scheduling models: fixed and flexible access. Focus groups and interviews were conducted. The participants were divided in their view of the ideal role of the library program in the school: eight favored a flexible access program while seven preferred the fixed schedule. Findings indicated that preference was not based on the current scheduling in which the teachers are working. All five participants at the fixed access school advocated a change to a flexible program, while seven of the ten participants at the flexible program desired a return to a fixed schedule. The findings also showed that the majority of participants at the flexible access school did not fully understand the mechanics of the flexible program. These results indicate the need for increased librarian outreach and teacher education about the benefits of the flexible access program.

Headings:

Media programs (education).

School libraries – Evaluation.

School libraries – Relations with teachers and curriculum.

School libraries – Scheduling
FIXED OR FLEXIBLY SCHEDULED
SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMS:
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

by
Gretchen Daub Westman

A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April, 2002

Approved by:

________________________
Adviser
Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Literature Review 3

Methodology 8

The Fixed-Access School 12

The Flexible-Access School 18

Teacher Discussions 22

Discussion 36

Conclusions 45

References 48

Appendices 51
Introduction

Two types of scheduling are in practice in school library media centers: fixed scheduling, with classes coming at a set time each week, and flexible access, offering teachers the opportunity to bring their classes in as needed. In addition, there are “hybrids” with different policies at different grade levels. The school library media community advocates strongly for the flexible access model, but teachers are not yet convinced of its value. This study focuses on teacher perceptions of school library programs. The guiding question is: Do teachers perceive the role of the school library differently based on scheduling?

Prior to the publication of Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs (AASL, 1988), the traditional school library program consisted of teaching “library skills” as a separate curriculum area. Classes visited the library once a week at a fixed time, practiced such things as using the card catalog or atlas, and checked out books for recreational reading. The library was seen as a “special,” like art or music class, which gave the classroom teacher released time for planning and administrative tasks.

The vision set forth in Information Power was quite different. The media specialist emerged with a more active role as an educational partner, collaborating with teachers in planning and instruction. This new role goes far beyond the traditional role of the librarian as a materials resource and provider of teacher release time. The media center program becomes an integral part of the instructional framework.
A large part of the new paradigm is the concept of flexible access to the media center. In this format, there are no regular weekly visits. Teachers schedule blocks of time in the media center for work on specific projects. A class might come every day for two weeks for a geography project, or just once during a two-week period for book talks and free reading. Rather than being limited to checkout once a week, individual students could come at any time to find new materials. Small groups could gather in the library media center for research and other activities.

Much research has been done on the effects of flexible access on student achievement (Lance, Welborn & Hamilton-Pennell, 1993). Much has been written about the role of the school administrator in formulating a strong media program (Donham, 1998; Haycock, 1990). The general consensus is that everyone benefits from a well-run, flexible library program.

The prevailing attitude in the current literature is that teachers are more likely to view the school library media program as integral to the instructional process once flexible access is implemented. Little has been written, however, about teacher attitudes toward this new order.

Every time a library media specialist interacts with a teacher, she indirectly impacts as many as 30 students. It is imperative that the impressions and needs of teachers are taken into account when any changes to a school media program are contemplated.
Literature Review

Since the first school library standards were published by the American Library Association in 1920, the field of school librarianship has been growing and evolving. These early standards outlined the school library primarily in terms of warehousing print materials. Subsequent revisions in 1945, 1960 and 1975 saw the field integrating more and more with all aspects of education (Shontz, 1991). By the early 1970s, school librarians began to emerge as “instructional consultants.” This new role met with resistance, both from teachers and members of the school library profession (Turner, 1998). Teachers were not pleased with what they viewed as interference, while librarians felt it was too much on top of an already heavy workload.

Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs (AASL, 1988) defined the role of the now-named school library media specialist for the new information era. Three separate, but inter-related, components made up this role: information specialist, teacher and instructional consultant. The media specialist needed to work with faculty to coordinate the use of resources, teach information skills to students and assist faculty with designing and implementing units of study. Ideally, media specialists and teachers would work collaboratively to develop and teach multidisciplinary units involving a variety of resources and activities (AASL, 1988, p.21).
In 1998, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) published *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*. This volume expanded and reworked the standards set out in the previous version, setting the stage for education in the new millennium.

The focus of school library media programs has moved from resources to students to creating a community of lifelong learners. Students and their learning remain at the core of library media programs and services, shaping the functions of school library media specialists. Effective teaching today is seen as a holistic process involving all aspects of student life and requiring continual assessment and feedback for meaningful learning (p.v).

A clear difference in the 1998 version of *Information Power* is the change from “instructional consultant” to “instructional partner.” The dissatisfaction of both teachers and media specialists with the former term led the authors of the revised standards to describe the media specialist as a partner who “works closely with individual teachers in the critical areas of designing authentic learning tasks and assessments and integrating the information and communication abilities required to meet subject matter standards” (p.5).

The concept of partnership inherently requires equality. All participants are allowed to participate in the decision-making process. Many texts currently in use in the field of school librarianship allude to the need for developing positive relationships with teachers (e.g., AASL, 1998; Donham, 1998; Salmon, Goldfarb, Greenblatt & Strauss, 1996; Turner, 1988). However, these texts look at issues from the media specialist perspective rather than that of the teacher. In her monograph *Enhancing Teaching and Learning: A Leadership Guide for School Library Media Specialists*, Donham (1998) devotes whole chapters to students and administrators, but none to teachers. The terms “student” and “principal” have multiple entries in the index; teachers are listed only in the
context of “teacher release time.” Media specialists are determined to convince teachers to make changes in how they perceive and use the school library media center, but rarely ask teachers what they need or want (Dupree, 1996, p.8).

What is the perspective of teachers about the role of the school library media program? The ideal, as defined by school library establishment, is a media center involved with all curriculum areas, in which the library media specialist provides “intellectual access to information through learning activities that are integrated into the curriculum” (AASL, 1998, p.6). There is clearly a gap between this vision and the reality of the school environment. In a report generated for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Hall (1986) notes that, despite school-wide outreach in school libraries during the 1960s and 1970s, and a gradual move toward resource-based teaching, educators still relied primarily on textbooks. Ann Irving comments that when “the teacher views his role as that of sole dispenser of knowledge, information handling skills will appear irrelevant and unnecessary” (1981, as cited in Hall, 1986). Hall goes on to describe changes needed in teacher education programs to develop an awareness of school library media programs in new teachers, stating “that teachers need training and experience in knowledge about information sources, information skills, and teaching information concepts and skills within the curriculum” (p.6). Sixteen years later, a content analysis of five education journals over a 10-year span found no mention of school library media specialists as instructional partners. School library personnel were shown only in the traditional role of providing materials, rather than as integral members of the education team (Agness, 1997).
Flexible access to the media center is considered central to the concept of school library media center involvement with the entire education process. The AASL maintains that “the integrated library media program requires that an open schedule be maintained” (Salmon, 1996, p.265). It is suggested that teachers will not view the library as an extension of the classroom, or the media specialist as a full partner in developing a community of learners if students are visiting the library once a week on the traditional “fixed schedule.” When discussing teachers in the context of open access, the literature usually portrays them as unwilling to give up the fixed schedule because they will lose release (planning) time (Donham, 1998, p. 113). The process of moving from fixed to flexible access is often shown as combative, with teachers and librarians as adversaries. Farmer notes that “librarians talk among themselves, often complaining about lack of teacher participation and teachers remain ignorant of the help awaiting them” (1993, as cited in Godshall, 1998, p. 12). It is not surprising that flexible access is only slowly being adopted.

Literature regarding assessment of school library media programs does advocate collecting feedback from teachers. Shontz (1991) states that the “resource center program evaluation plan includes both formal and informal needs assessment and involves students, classroom teachers, staff, administration and parents and other community members.” Salmon (1996) encourages utilizing taxonomies of involvement for media specialists, teachers and students to assess the school community’s view of the library program. Turner (1996) discusses a Library Power training session in which teachers were invited to list ways in which they could be helped to become better teachers and how school librarians could provide assistance.
As with any service-oriented organization, the end-user of the school library media center should be the center of program development. This can only be accomplished by asking teachers how they view the role of the school library media center within the school, how they utilize the services provided, and what they would like to see offered. The literature provides little information about teachers’ needs and wants, focusing instead on the desirability of converting teachers to the new guidelines. The goal of this study is to add to our knowledge base by examining two learning communities to see if scheduling impacts how teachers perceive the role of the media center program within the school.
Methodology

Two school media centers were involved in this exploratory study. One major difference between them was scheduling: one employs a fixed access program, while the other offers a flexible program. Similarities include school size, composition of the student body, media center staffing, length of service of the media specialist and the curriculum. Both schools offer open checkout, meaning students may come to the library at any time to exchange books.

There were two facets to the study. The first component involved becoming familiar with the institutional culture of the media center and entailed a four-day period of observation in the media center during February. Points of note included numbers of patrons, how the media center was used throughout the school day, numbers of whole-class, small group or individual activities, frequency of teacher visits to the media center, roles of media center staff, programming offered, collection information, available technology and circulation statistics. A time grid was used (see Appendix E) in addition to extensive field notes. At the flexible access school, the number of times the intermediate level teachers had scheduled their students into the library since the start of the school year was counted.

Following the observation period, intermediate level teachers participated in discussions about the school library program. The higher grades were chosen because at this level students have begun doing more complex research project with the potential for increased media center use.
Initially, the intent was to interview teachers individually. The principal of the fixed school recommended a focus group approach, stating that it would be more convenient for the teachers. Focus groups are often used by libraries seeking to develop or improve services or by researchers looking at information use patterns. The purpose of the focus group is not to reach agreement or to make a decision about an issue, but to develop an understanding of the participants’ opinions (Oberg, 1995).

The purpose of the discussions was to look for patterns in teacher attitudes toward the media program. The focus group format allowed the exploration of new areas as they arose from pre-written questions. Opening questions were based on the observations made in the media centers. Topics explored included:

- How do teachers use the school media center?
- How does the librarian assist the teacher with instruction?
- Do teachers feel the media center collection satisfies the needs of the curriculum? Their own professional development?
- Are teachers able to use the media center as they find appropriate within the structure of the scheduling format?
- Are there changes teachers would like to see?

First the librarians at the schools were contacted to explain the purpose of the study. It was important to approach them first, as the observation component was central to the study. Having secured their agreement (see Appendix F), proposals were sent to the principals (see Appendix A) and school districts (see Appendix B).

The focus groups were scheduled by grade level. At the fixed school, groups were held during the teacher planning period. At the flexible school meetings occurred
after school. All meetings were held in classrooms. Fifteen teachers were invited at each school; five teachers participated at the fixed school, nine at the flexible school. The teachers at the fixed school only had three days’ notice of the meetings due to communication problems with the main office, which affected the participation rate adversely. Teachers were introduced to the study and informed of the meeting time by letter (see Appendix C). Prior to the start of each group I went around to the classrooms to personally invite the teachers and answer their questions.

Consent forms (see Appendix D) were distributed at the beginning of the focus groups and time was allowed time for questions or concerns to be aired. Thirty minutes were allotted for each group; some went longer to give all the participants an opportunity to express their views. One group, the third grade staff at the fixed access school, did not have any participants. Due to the pressures of the state writing test, the fourth grade at the flexible school chose not to schedule a meeting.

Several teachers who were unable to attend the meetings requested a questionnaire to fill out. A list of questions and copies of the consent forms were provided. The teachers were invited to either email or post their ideas and opinions to the researcher at their convenience. No responses were received.

One third grade teacher from the flexible access school was unable to attend the focus group meeting. She contacted the researcher and an individual interview was scheduled. This meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes.

In all, five teachers representing grades four and five participated at the fixed access school and ten teachers representing grades three and five participated at the
flexible access school. Teachers who participated appeared to be similar in age, years of teaching and time of service at their current schools.

After gathering the teachers’ opinions, a content analysis of the session notes and tapes was performed. Each idea mentioned was noted with a count of how often that theme arose. Comments from the two schools were compared to determine if any distinct differences were evident in the responses.
The Fixed-Access School

The fixed-access school is one of 27 elementary schools in a large urban district. The school operates on a traditional calendar. The school day lasts from 9:00-3:30; both before and after school care are offered. Special services available at the school include speech therapy, physical and occupational therapy, an academically gifted program and a self-contained BED classroom. There is a nature trail on the grounds as well as an outdoor classroom.

The current school enrollment is 752 students. The student body composition is 52% Caucasian, 39% African American, and 9% other minorities. A variety of ethnicities are represented, including Latino, Asian and Arabic. There are five classrooms at each grade level as well as one Kindergarten-Grade One Multi-Age class.

The school library is centrally located near the front door, across from the main office. It is a large, bright space with skylights and windows. Many examples of student work are on display. Bookshelves are spaced well, allowing for easy movement and access. Near the main door, the “Easy” section surrounds the teaching area where the librarian’s rocking chair is located. Most classes are held in this area, unless the tables are needed for research or other activities.

The non-fiction collection is located along the outside wall. Large blue numbers indicate the Dewey classifications. As well, stuffed animals are strategically placed on
the top shelves to serve as guides. There is a frog above the amphibian section, a gorilla over the mammals and a large hamburger indicates the cookbooks, among others.

The fiction section fills three long rows of shelving. Many of the books have genre stickers (historical fiction, Newbery, and mystery, for example) to aid students in selecting books. Paperbacks and series books are shelved within the larger fiction collection.

Eight computer terminals are available for student use. They are set to the library catalog and changed to Internet access as needed. The district does not currently have filtering software. The librarian and media assistant monitor student computer use.

Along the back wall are three study carrels for reading tutoring. The professional and video collections are also in this area. The library office space is shared with the Reading Recovery staff and speech therapy. There is a large storeroom off the back of the office.

The current librarian was hired three years ago with the understanding that the school was moving toward flexible scheduling. Before she began her position, the principal left the school. The incoming principal agreed to try flexible access at the fourth and fifth grades while maintaining a fixed schedule with the younger students. Once the lower grades were scheduled there was less time for the upper grades than there would have been with a fully fixed schedule. Despite this, there was some good planning and discussion between the librarian and the teachers.

The librarian went on maternity leave in November of that first year. When she returned in April, it was clear that flexible access would not be adopted. A third principal
who was not persuaded of the advantages of flexible access has come on staff since that time.

The library is on a fully fixed schedule. The daily schedule is the same throughout the week, except on Wednesday when there is an extra class. Varying amounts of open time occur between the classes, ranging from ten minutes to 65 minutes. Due to the extra class, on Wednesday the longest open period is 30 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Media Center Class Schedule for Fixed Access School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:10 – 9:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40 – 11:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:20 – 11:55 Wednesday only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten-Grade 1 multi-age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 – 12:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20 – 2:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10 – 2:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The library does have an open checkout policy, possible because of the .75 time media assistant. Many students come in after the first bell rings at 8:45. Before school the librarian is available to help students with circulation and finding materials. When she is teaching, the media assistant is available to help individuals. A handful (an average of 13 per day during the observation period) comes in for checkout during the
school day. K-2 students are allowed one book at a time; 3-5 students are allowed two. The circulation period is two weeks. No student with an overdue book is allowed to check out another until it is returned.

The librarian does her own planning for instruction with little input from the classroom teachers. All classes on a grade level do essentially the same lessons each week; planning different activities for 31 classes would be too time-consuming. Information skills are woven into the lessons whenever possible. For example, fourth grade classes were doing research on rocks and minerals during the observation period. Library and information skills required for the project include Internet searching, using indexes in reference books and citing sources. The research project was a small-group activity; students chose their own groups and developed the final product to be presented to the class. A board game, posters and written reports were some of the choices made by students.

The fifth grade classes began a “Reader’s Theater” project on Native American legends in October. At that time, they were studying these cultures in social studies. The small-group project involved choosing a legend, creating and typing a script, practicing and performing the legend for a kindergarten class. Because the classes are limited to 40 minutes per week, some groups were still finishing this project in February. Classes who had completed the project were listening to “The Hobbit” read aloud during the library period.

Each fifth grade class has several media helpers who aid the media assistant during their class time. The students check books in, shelve what is on the cart and do
some book repair and simple processing. The media assistant or librarian is responsible for checking new materials out.

K-3 classes were working on the North Carolina Children’s Book Awards during the observation period. Each week they listened to two or three of the stories on the list. The librarian tried to group each week’s books thematically (e.g. African stories, the same illustrator or animal stories). When the children had heard all the nominees, they voted for their favorites by dropping pieces of paper in bags labeled with the book titles. This is an annual activity. In addition to this, some of the kindergarten classes were still watching the Native American legend performances during their library time.

Class behavior is monitored with a sticker chart. Classes who are cooperative and attentive are awarded a sticker at the end of the period. The class at each grade level with the most stickers at the end of the quarter is invited to the media center for crackers, juice and board games.

During the observation period it was noted that classes often arrived late for media time and were picked up late as well. Conversations between the teacher and librarian involved behavior reports and were brief. The upper-grade classes often arrived and left without teacher supervision.

The school has a very active reading tutor program. Many of the tutors come from the retirement community across the street. Others are parents or high school students fulfilling a community service requirement. Due to lack of space, the tutoring takes place in the library. Three carrels are available for tutoring; often there are more than three tutors at a time, so they spread out in the library. Wednesday morning and Thursday afternoon are particularly busy with as many as eight tutoring sessions going on
concurrently. There is constant coming-and-going during these times as well as a degree of noise.

Reading Recovery small groups also meet throughout the day in the library. They use folding chairs in a back corner. A part of the media center office is used for individual Reading Recovery sessions.

A few times during the observation period, small groups of students came to the library to work on projects. The librarian encourages this as long as the children are quiet and self-directed. Because of the busy class schedule, she is rarely available to help small groups. If the students don’t work well, they are sent back to their classrooms.

Teachers came into the library to look for resources seven times during the observation period. They were able to find most things on their own. One teacher came to discuss available resources on energy topics and offered suggestions of new materials to order. The librarian keeps a list of requested titles to refer to when she is ordering.

The librarian offers student-parent book discussion groups for grades 2-3 and 4-5. CHARGE! (Child Adult Reading Group Encounter) meets in the library before school four times a year. Families bring breakfast items; juice is provided. The book discussion is based on the character education program adopted by the school district. Students and parents discuss the character traits portrayed in the books. Grant money was used to purchase eight sets of novels at each level for the program, so there is no repetition in a two-year cycle.

This library is busy throughout the day. Whole class lessons make up the bulk of the activity, with individual and small group reading tutoring much in evidence. During
the observation period there was minimal teacher-use of the facility. Communication between the librarian and faculty was limited.

The Flexible-Access School

The flexible-access school is one of eight elementary schools in a smaller urban district. The school operates on a traditional calendar. The school day lasts from 7:50-2:30; after school care is offered. Special services available at the school include speech therapy, physical and occupational therapy, an academically gifted program and Spanish language classes.

The current school enrollment is 667 students. The student body composition is 65% Caucasian, 17% African American, and 18% other minorities. A variety of ethnicities are represented, including Latino, Asian and European. There are five classes at each grade level K-5 as well as two pre-school classes.

The school has several buildings: an administrative building which houses the offices, cafeteria and library, a large classroom building and several “pods” which house a variety of classrooms and special services. The school utilizes trailers for several classes, as well. Most of the buildings are linked with covered walkways, although there are several places where students must walk unsheltered.

The school library is located in the basement of the administrative building. There is no interior access to the library; students must come from outside. The space is bright, but small for the size of the student population. Student work is displayed throughout the library. There are many motivational posters on the walls, such as “Even
Einstein Asked Questions” and “Your Mind is Like a Parachute: It Works Best When Open.” Bookshelves are close together due to the small space.

The library houses an amphitheatre for storytelling and class instruction that doesn’t require table space. Within the amphitheatre space is a large whiteboard and a collection of maps. The “Everybody” (“Easy”) bookshelves encircle the outside of the amphitheatre. The collection is clearly labeled with large letters to direct children to the books. Books are displayed on top.

The Non-fiction section is in freestanding bookshelves at the far side of the library. “Peanuts” comics posters are displayed on the ends of the rows to announce the Dewey numbers and what is in that part of the collection. The Reference section is located along the back wall. Tables are located near the reference books as well as in the center of the library for large group instruction.

The Fiction section is tucked in between the amphitheatre and the tables. Large letters label the shelves. Paperbacks are shelved in their own area near the main entrance.

Six computer terminals are available for student use. One is set permanently to the library catalog while the others offer Internet access. All computers in the school are networked so students can access their personal folder from anywhere in the building. The library computers are set to the library homepage. The district does not currently have filtering software but plans are in place to install a filtering program.

The library has a listening center, poetry corner and cushioned window seat for student use. The large office space is shared with the technology coordinator and the occupational therapist. The school does not have a dedicated computer lab; the technical specialist has a mobile lab that he transports to the classrooms. When this lab is in use
computer speed in the library terminals slows down significantly. Often, teachers will send small groups of students to the library to work on projects on the computers. In addition, there are computers in all the classrooms.

The library is on a fully flexible schedule with open checkout. Checkout is fairly steady throughout the school day with an average of 50 students per day when the weather was good. There was one rainy day when there were only 32 students for open circulation. A “Lunch Bunch” contingent of fifth graders come virtually every day for checkout. Kindergarten students are allowed one book at a time; all others are allowed three. Students are not allowed to check out more than one book in a series or on a specific topic at a time. The circulation period is two weeks.

Each month the librarian develops several themed programs for classes to attend. The schedule book is available for teachers to pencil their classes in. During the observation period, the themes included: African folklore, African-American research, Presidential Trivia, the Winter Olympics and Chinese New Year. For the primary grades, the programs usually include stories and some type of activity. The students usually spend some time checking out books. Upper grades use the monthly themes to practice use of various reference materials, such as the almanac, encyclopedia or Internet.

During the observation period classes came to the library for these programs 13 times. Teacher-initiated activities occurred four times. There were three visits by unscheduled small groups of students for individual work in addition to individual students with information needs. Teachers were observed looking for resources six times.
The librarian came to the school three years ago. Prior to that, the faculty had been studying the issue of flexible access. When the librarian was hired, it was agreed that the library would remain on a fixed schedule for one semester and go to flexible access after the winter break. The principal announced this change at the beginning of the school year.

The librarian introduced the themed programming when the school adopted the flexible access policy. This is an unusual feature not normally seen in a flexible access library program. It was seen as a way to get teachers into the library and wean them from a fixed schedule. The library staff is wondering if this has had its intended effect, or if it has become just a variation on fixed scheduling. Teachers usually wait to sign up until they have seen the monthly offerings, rather than planning classroom-related visits to the library.

Tutors and small groups use the library space. Teacher assistants will sometimes accompany groups of children, or the children come on their own. One first grade teacher has a “library center” where four students come to the library to browse and read. They carry a timer to let them know when they are to return.

The second grade teachers have done the most cooperative planning with the librarian. One group has been doing a long-term author study, while another is working on a four-week biography unit.
Teacher Discussions

Fixed Access School – Grade Five

This group was composed of fifth grade teachers from the fixed access school. The group met in the team leader’s classroom during their planning period. These fifth grade teachers do not have assistants so this 40-minute period is their only release time in the school day. Several teachers spoke to me about this and were simply unable to attend the session. The two teachers who participated were at the school during the brief experiment with the hybrid schedule two years ago. They agreed that a hybrid schedule is not workable in a school of this size; by the time the primary classes are scheduled, the only time left for the intermediate grades is what they would have been allowed on a fixed schedule.

Although a list of questions was prepared, the discussion flowed through the topics without prompting. The opening question “Describe how you use the school library” was enough to begin a wide-ranging discussion.

Teachers mentioned using the library in the following ways:

- Pulling materials for student use in the classroom (science and social studies)
- Finding resources in the professional library
- Sending small groups of students to the library for research

Teachers would like to use the library in a variety of ways:
• Sending small groups of students to the library to do research when the librarian is available to assist them
• Whole class research activities in the library, rather than checking the books out to the classroom
• Giving students more opportunity for research in the library, instead of literature based lessons
• Planning with the librarian to teach units that connect with what is happening in the classroom

Teachers cited a variety of barriers to greater use of the media center:

• Time was mentioned frequently, in several contexts: there is little time when the media center is not used for a class, the librarian has little time to help small groups because she is teaching classes, the teachers don’t have time to meet with the librarian for collaborative planning
• The morning planning period is the only time the teachers have available during the day; the librarian is teaching during that time
• The librarian needs more help in the library: “not enough hands”
• There are too many committee meetings in the afternoons to allow for planning then
• Many faculty members are not open to change: the primary faculty don’t want to share their assistants, and don’t want to try a flexible schedule
• Not enough access to the computer lab is also a hindrance to research efforts
• “We’re out of date” and “need to try new models”
Although the teachers have concerns about the scheduling situation in the library, they had uniformly high praise for the librarian:

- The librarian is open and willing to work with them, but there isn’t time in the day
- The librarian has added extensively to the math and science resources for the upper grades
- The librarian asks teachers what they want in the collection and responds to those requests

The teachers who participated in this focus group suggested a variety of solutions to the library issues:

- The “Big Art” concept: the art teacher recruited two grade levels to swap weeks – one week the fourth grade has an extra long art period, the next week, it’s the second grade. The teachers would like to see this in the media center, perhaps in conjunction with the computer lab
- The teachers want flexible access to the library along with at least a part time assistant in the classroom to allow more planning time
- Any change in scheduling will need to come from the administration; committee suggestions don’t work. If the faculty says “no” then the idea is quickly tabled.

The fifth grade teachers who participated in the discussion want changes in how their school library is used. They would like more access with the librarian available to assist students with projects. These teachers also want a part time classroom assistant so students could be using the library with no loss of planning time. They see a need for a
change in how the computer lab is used, as well, offering more opportunities for Internet
research. It was suggested that primary grades should utilize classroom centers for
computer lessons, freeing up both the computer lab and the tech specialist to work with
the older students. One of the teachers mentioned that she was going to use this as a
journal topic for her students: What is your ideal media center?

Fixed Access School – Fourth Grade

The second focus group involved fourth grade teachers at the fixed school. Like
their fifth grade colleagues, these teachers have no assistants. Their forty-minute
“specials” time in the afternoon is their only release time from the students. Three of theive teachers took part in the discussion.

The teachers reported using the library in the following ways:

• Looking for resources for classroom use
• “Scouting out” an area to send students to, looking for information
• Sending small groups of students for independent work

The teachers mentioned these factors as making library use difficult:

• Hours aren’t convenient; it needs to be open more before and after school
• The collection needs more variety: need to update the reference
collection, “we need those shelves filled”
• Time is an issue: when the teachers are free to talk, the librarian is
teaching
• No time or space for large groups is available outside the scheduled class
  period
These teachers had positive comments about the library staff:

- They make an effort to find what’s needed; the librarian keeps a list of requested materials for ordering
- Some of the library lessons coincide with the curriculum: for example, rocks and minerals research and poetry
- The librarian teaches research-related skills so the classroom teacher doesn’t have to
- In the past, the librarian sent around a paper asking teachers to list the curriculum goals in each subject matter, but didn’t do that this year

The fourth grade teachers had these suggestions for improved use of the library:

- Use the curriculum sheets again to open a discussion about curriculum goals
- Utilize student helpers more for basic tasks (shelving, circulation) to free up library staff to help independent workers
- Open the library for longer periods before and after school so teachers and the librarian have time to talk
- Update the reference and AV collections

Like their fifth grade counterparts, these teachers want their students to have more opportunities to use the library for school projects. One teacher felt the primary grade students should be using the library more frequently as well, to get exposure to how it’s used and to the collection. The teachers expressed a desire to talk more with the librarian and suggested before or after school hours as a way to accomplish this. Again, time is
significant factor; the teachers have only this planning period when the librarian is teaching their students.

Flexible Access School – Grade Five

This group was composed of fifth grade teachers at the flexible access school. We met after school as the first item on their team-meeting agenda. All five teachers participated in the discussion. Knowing the teachers had other items on their meeting agenda, I ended the group after 35 minutes; the participants could have gone on longer.

The fifth grade students change classes for math and language arts. They go daily to specials and Spanish, and have a fixed science period on alternate days. As a result the teachers have little flexibility within their schedule. The teachers have half-time assistants in the classroom. Three of the fifth grade classrooms are located in the large classroom building; two are housed in trailers at the other end of the campus.

These teachers use the library in these ways:

- Pulling resources for class activities
- Finding information to introduce a topic
- Collaborating with the librarian on social studies units

The teachers felt these issues made library use difficult:

- The fifth grade schedule is so tight that there is a “small window of opportunity” for library use: students change classes, many students go to pull-out activities (ESL, OT, etc), teachers must work with four or five reading groups in each class
- “If I could get my whole class down there at once, I’d go.”
• “My entire schedule is fixed – how can I have one random blip in the week?”

• The library scheduling system is confusing; too hard to get down there to do it

• Flexible scheduling requires collaboration which has to be a huge priority; requires too much from the teachers

The teachers had very positive comments about the librarian:

• “She has strengths I don’t have” – storytelling and book-talking

• The librarian will pull resources and send them to the classroom

• The librarian is very open to collaboration if there’s time; actually solicits collaboration, very important to the flexible schedule

• The librarian creates a supportive library atmosphere: “When I first came here it seemed like chaos, but now I like the level of activity in there.”

• Students enjoy the library programs when they go

• The librarian will call the classroom if the students don’t arrive to remind the teacher to send them down

Four of the five teachers mentioned one solution to their library-use issues:

• Return to fixed schedule so they know students get regular exposure to the library

• Even a fixed time every other week would be better than the current situation

One of the teachers has worked with the librarian on several collaborative units. Her impression of the flexible program is more positive than the others:
• “I learn from what she does with the students and change my own approach.”

This panel of teachers doesn’t see a benefit to the flexible access program. Their schedule is so complex, they don’t see much opportunity for using the school library. Having to visit the library to sign up for time is an impediment for them; they see this requirement as confusing and hard to manage time-wise.

The teachers have a positive view of the librarian and her willingness to work with them. The librarian is willing to shift other classes around to accommodate the fifth grade schedule, but the teachers themselves aren’t comfortable with this. They feel they would be “bumping someone else” and that would “alienate my colleagues.”

When the teachers described their schedule to me, they mentioned the complexity of the two-hour language block. They juggle four or five reading groups each during this time, staggering their work time between the groups. The teachers didn’t see this as an opportunity to send small groups for units with the librarian, but as another scheduling issue. “It’s hard to send them to the library because I don’t know exactly how the time will go with the other groups.”

Several of the teachers talked about the themed programming as if that was all that was available in the library. “I don’t plan specific lessons more than two weeks in advance. By the time I know if the programs she is offering fit in, the schedule is filled up.” The majority of them were not aware that they could plan with the librarian for any topic or project they were working on, independent of what she suggests.

Although these teachers want to return to a fixed schedule, they realize this is not going to happen. The team leader said to me, “We aren’t going backwards.”
Flexible Access School – Grade Three

Third grade teachers from the flexible access school made up the fourth focus group. We met after school in one of the classrooms. Four of the five teachers were present; one met briefly with me before leaving to teach at the After School Program. I spent 30 minutes with the others.

The third grade schedule is similar to the fifth grade, although the students do not change classes for science and social studies. However, the language block involves the same issues of juggling many reading groups. The third grade does have full-time classroom assistants.

One teacher expressed positive opinions about the flexible program. In the short conversation I had with her she make the following comments:

- “I like the flex schedule. I’m always changing things around in my classroom.”
- “I do some of my stuff, not just hers. The librarian has lots of good ideas.”
- The teacher uses a lot of the reference materials, the computers and magazines
- She “loves the librarian” – very hard-working
- Library staff is very helpful

The three teachers who participated in the longer discussion use the library for:

- Researching classroom projects: sometimes taking students to choose materials, sometimes checking resources out for classroom use
• Using the programs the librarian offers
• Working with the librarian on short units, such as biographies
• Sending small groups down to use the computers or look up information

These three teachers had a negative overall view of the flexible schedule:
• Scheduling is a problem; there are only a few times when classes can go and it’s hard to find a variety. The library staff doesn’t let them come at the same time every visit
• It’s “a pain” to go to the library and schedule a time
• The teachers want the students to have exposure to information skills before they need them for a class project
• The teachers won’t send small groups down without an assistant or volunteer – it’s “too much” to expect the librarian to watch the students
• Students aren’t getting nearly as much library time as they did on the fixed schedule

One of the teachers wanted more evidence that flexible scheduling is truly beneficial to students:
• Increased circulation statistics aren’t enough; wants information comparing flexible and fixed schedules on exposure to information skills and time spent on actual activities
• Collaboration is possible with a fixed schedule – can work from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study when planning library lessons

These three teachers had positive comments about the library staff:
• The librarian is a great teacher and storyteller
• The library staff will locate needed materials for teachers; will find what’s needed if it’s not there

Like their fifth grade colleagues, the three teachers who participated in the long discussion would like a return to the fixed schedule:

• Flexible access is too much work for the teacher
• Students aren’t getting as much library time
• One teacher would like a weekly time for stories

As long as the school is on a flexible schedule, the teachers suggested these changes to make the library more useful for them:

• Gear pre-set programming more toward third grade needs – the intermediate level options are more for fourth and fifth grade
• Allow scheduling via email so teachers don’t have to go down to the library to sign the book

The majority of these third grade teachers are not happy with the flexible schedule. Like the fifth grade teachers, they feel their students are not getting enough library access with this model. One teacher would like more empirical evidence that flexible scheduling is advantageous to students.

As with all the focus groups, time was mentioned as a significant factor. Time for communicating with the librarian, time for fitting in a class visit to the library and even time for just going in to the library to sign the schedule book are all issues for this team of teachers. They would like to be allowed to sign up for library programs without visiting the library.
Several of the third grade teachers are wedded to the program choices offered by the librarian. One teacher commented that the programs offered were geared more toward the upper grades but didn’t seem to realize that she could ask the librarian to modify programs to suit her students’ needs.

An interview was arranged with the remaining third grade teacher at her request. She spoke positively about the flexible access program.

The teacher mentioned using the library in the following ways:

- The teachers utilize the offered programming but also bring their own ideas to the librarian
- Students visit the library often for checkout

The teacher had positive comments about the offered programming:

- Teachers can “pick and choose” what works for them
- The librarian has a good sense of what students can accomplish in the allotted time; there aren’t a lot of half-done projects coming back to the classroom
- Seeing the offered topics each month helps the teachers stay aware of what events are coming up

This teacher feels that the flexible schedule works in large part because of the librarian’s attitude:

- The librarian is very flexible and will work with teachers on whatever they need. For example, the library offers programming on Native Americans in the fall, but the librarian brings the unit back out in the spring when this teacher has her Native American unit
• The librarian lets teachers bring their students as often as necessary to reach a goal

• The librarian will help teachers order materials for classroom use as well as taking suggestions for additions to the library collection

• The library is inviting; not so many rules that students are uncomfortable

• “She is one of those librarians you love to go see.”

This teacher mentioned teacher attitude as the biggest barrier to successful implementation of the flexible access model:

• This is hard for teachers who are rigid

• Most teachers don’t want something that requires effort on their part

• Some teachers still insist on “their time”

• The school staff is polarized on this issue: “I want what I want.”

The teacher had several ideas for increasing acceptance of the flexible model:

• The principal should mandate use of the library and be sure it is happening

• The librarian should run small-group workshops for teachers early in the year to demonstrate the types of things that are possible

• Teachers need a better understanding of the library’s function

• There should be small-group sessions for students to explore reference materials early in the year before they need them for a project

This teacher expressed feelings about the school library that go to the heart of a flexible access program:

• “We need to be aware as teachers how we set examples in our presentations [i.e. not doing African-American history only in February
but interweaving it all through the year] and the library resources are the primary source for this modeling.”

- “The library should be more revered by staff and students; it should be the most important room in the school.”

This third grade teacher has embraced the flexible schedule. She views the openness of the model as an asset rather than a drawback as it complements her teaching style. She also realizes that the librarian-designed program offerings are only suggestions and has suggested and implemented ideas of her own throughout the school year.
**Discussion**

Fifteen teachers were invited to participate at each school. At the fixed access school only five participants accepted the invitation. All of them expressed a desire to move to a flexible schedule in the library. Their willingness to participate in this discussion might be a direct result of their wish to see change at their school. Teachers who are satisfied with the current model might not have felt the same need to express their views. One cannot assume that all fifteen intermediate level teachers have similar ideas about the school library.

The ten teachers who participated at the flexible access school expressed more variety in their opinions. Although the majority of them desire a return to a fixed schedule, a vocal minority supports the flexible paradigm.

Teachers in both models reported using the school library in similar ways: finding resources for classroom use, sending small groups for research and sending whole classes for librarian-designed activities. At the fixed-access school these librarian-planned classes happen weekly at the same time for each class. Teachers are not involved in the planning of these activities, and the classes rarely relate to what is happening in the classroom. Although the flexible access library is not used as regularly for this type of activity, many teachers there still follow essentially the same model. Having penciled their class in for one of the librarian’s offerings they walk their students to the door of the library and return when the program is over to retrieve them. This
piece of this particular flexible access program seems to have become just a variant of a fixed program with teachers relying on the librarian to plan and implement the activities.

All the teachers who participated at the fixed school and the majority of those at the flexible school expressed concerns about time. Time is an issue impacting student use of the library as well as teacher-librarian communication and collaboration. Teachers at both schools want their students to have more time in the library. At the fixed school, the restriction is due to school-wide scheduling. Because the librarian is teaching six or seven classes per day, there is little time when the library is not in use by a large group. At the flexible school, teachers have found themselves “frozen out” due to their own complex scheduling. Changing classes, pull-out programs and activities such as chorus and science lab have locked the intermediate teachers into a rigid schedule. Only a few of them understand how the flexible access model can work within their schedule.

Another time issue articulated by the teachers was their difficulty in finding time to meet with the librarian. Teachers at the fixed school have no classroom assistants. Their only release time during the school day is when their students are at “specials.” During this time, the librarian is teaching and unavailable for consultation. Teachers expressed a wish for assistants even just for part of the day, freeing up the teacher to meet with colleagues. This flexibility, combined with a more open library schedule, would give them the increased access they desire.

The majority of the teachers at the flexible school decried the lack of planning time as well. These teachers are fortunate to have classroom assistants (full-time in third grade and half-time in fifth). It is interesting that teachers without assistants see the possibility of even part-time help as the key to collaboration, while those teachers with
classroom aid still see time lacking. This indicates that teacher attitudes about the importance of collaboration are a significant factor in a successful cooperative program. If teachers are not willing to make time for planning with the school librarian, flexible access is difficult to implement.

Several of the teachers at the flexible school mentioned the difficulty of finding time to go to the library and sign up for class activities. They indicated they would be more willing to schedule library time if they could contact the librarian via email or telephone. This is one impediment that the librarian could easily remove. The original purpose of having the teachers come to the library to sign up was to foster communication with the librarian. Because the planning book is open for teachers to write in, they usually pencil their classes in and leave again without talking to library staff. Being allowed to schedule through a phone call or email might actually increase the amount of communication since the librarian would need to respond to the request. Although this would not address the fundamental difficulty of finding time for library activities within the classroom schedule, it would eliminate one perceived barrier to greater participation in the library.

The fifth grade teachers at the fixed school and a third grade teacher at the flexible school who supports the library model indicated the importance of the principal in acceptance of the flexible schedule. The fifth grade teachers commented that “we need an administrator who will mandate the change. Committee suggestions don’t work. If some members of the faculty say no, that’s it.” Throughout the literature, principal support is seen as essential to the successful implementation of the flexible program (e.g. AASL, 1991; Buchanan, 1991). Three principals have administered the fixed access
school during the time flexible access was considered and none fully supported it. Without the full backing of the administration, the change from fixed to flexible access will never occur.

At the flexible school, the teacher stated that ongoing supervision by the principal is needed if all faculty members are to use the library as it “should be used.” This echoes Buchanan’s comments that “the principal continues to be responsible for making teachers aware of the expectations of and for the program” (p.82). When the school first went to flexible access, the principal stated clearly that the new model would be adopted. This was a good start, but the principal’s involvement cannot end there. The number of scheduled visits by whole classes or small groups during the period of September – February ranged from two to 20 for the third and fifth grade classes. No minimum expectations for library use have been set. The principal must continue to articulate the importance of the library program and monitor its use. In the eyes of this teacher, that continued involvement hasn’t occurred.

All 15 teachers who participated in the study spoke positively of their school librarians. The librarians were seen as knowledgeable about the curriculum and collection, open to collaboration and willing to help teachers in any way they can. These are valuable traits in librarians working in any scheduling model, but are required in the flexible paradigm.

Teachers at the fixed school indicated that their librarian has the traits to implement the flexible schedule and they are aware of her desire to do so. She is open to collaboration when there is time, tries to be available to talk with them and listens to their suggestions about needed resources. The teachers did indicate that a survey about
curriculum goals would open a dialogue about classroom objectives. Perhaps curriculum mapping, a process where the librarian compiles bibliographies of resources meeting curriculum needs, would aid in creating this dialogue. It is a time-consuming process, however, and might be impossible within the time constraints of the fixed program in such a large school.

One teacher at the flexible school who admits to preferring a fixed schedule commented that her librarian “isn’t just open to collaboration, she actually solicits it. That’s really important for a flexible schedule.” The librarian’s role in creating a successful flexible access program is clear: “Flexible access programs demand tolerance, patience, a high frustration threshold, and a sense of humor. Program preparation and organization encourage but do not ensure student and staff participation, but a smile and flexibility do” (Buchanan, p. 23). The librarian needs to go beyond welcoming teachers and their ideas and must actively seek them out as well.

During the observation period at the flexible school, third graders from one class came individually to the library throughout the week to find information on inventors. This could have been an opportunity to reach out to a teacher who doesn’t often use the library. The librarian could have contacted the teacher and invited her to schedule small groups for research activities with the librarian. If the teacher responded favorably it might have “opened the door” for a greater understanding of why the library is there.

All of the teachers who participated at the fixed school expressed a wish for a new library model. They articulated the visions of the flexible program: collaborative work with the librarian, point of need scheduling and the ability to extend the classroom to the library. This is in contrast to the flexible school where the teachers were divided in their
acceptance of the flexible paradigm. Seven of the ten participants at the flexible school expressed a wish to return to the fixed schedule. Many of their comments indicated that they didn’t fully understand how flexible scheduling works.

The flexible access program at this school has a unique feature. The librarian offers several programs each month that teachers may schedule without consultation. This was started as a way to bring teachers to the library when flexible scheduling was first adopted, but according to the librarian it has become almost another type of fixed scheduling. Teachers rarely schedule library visits until they have seen the monthly offerings, and their visits are almost exclusively for the librarian’s programming.

The teachers’ comments bear out this concern. One teacher noted “I don’t plan specific lessons more than two weeks in advance. By the time I know what she’s offering the schedule is filled up.” A flexible access program should not be based on what the librarian “is offering” but on the needs and goals of the classroom. The library should become an extension of the classroom (AASL, 1991) rather than an unconnected learning experience.

By the librarian’s own admission the teachers need to be “weaned” from the monthly offerings. One option is to offer fewer choices; currently there are enough each month that a teacher can bring the class each week for a different activity. Lowering the number of options might encourage teachers to think of other reasons to bring their classes. The librarian could still send out the bulletin highlighting the month’s themes and special occasions and encourage teachers to plan library activities around these ideas. The bulletin should also emphasize the collaborative nature of the library program by
asking teachers what they want and how the library can help. Although this is often mentioned in the bulletin it is not stressed enough.

Several teachers mentioned that they would use the library more if they could find times when the whole class could go. Whole class activities are the basis of a fixed schedule and the teachers appear to be stuck on that idea. One of the benefits of the flexible schedule is that it allows small groups access to the library for meaningful activities (Buchanan, p. 40). Teachers mentioned the difficulties of juggling multiple reading groups; they should be encouraged to plan lessons with the librarian for some of the groups.

The second grade teachers at this school have been very open to small group library lessons. Students have come for author studies, biography work and social studies research. Units have been taught involving the teacher, the librarian and the technical specialist. The librarian needs to be proactive in encouraging this with the upper level teachers (Weeks, 2001). Although she is always receptive when teachers approach her, the librarian needs to seek out the upper level teachers with concrete suggestions on what small group activities are possible. This could be incorporated with in-service activities before the school year begins and mentioned at faculty meetings throughout the year.

This is another situation where curriculum mapping would be beneficial. Not only would it give the teachers a list of resources for their topics but it would allow the librarian to come up with ideas to present to them. Weeks (2001) advocates being “aggressively helpful” to teachers, rather than waiting for them to initiate planning. Many of the teachers at this school are open to ideas, as indicated by their use of the
librarian’s programming. The librarian needs to take an active role in steering library use toward classroom goals.

Three of the teachers indicated their preference for the flexible schedule. It is difficult to pinpoint why they prefer it when others do not. These three teachers are not similar to each other in length of service or teaching styles. One has been teaching almost 30 years; the second is much younger; and the third is a visiting teacher from another country.

These teachers share the trait of flexibility. One of them commented “This is hard for teachers who are rigid.” Another mentioned that she likes the schedule because “I’m always changing things around.” This underscores the importance of teacher attitude in the successful implementation of the flexible program. These teachers want the library to be part of their program and are willing to make an effort and find the time to make it happen. They are using a mix of pre-planned activities and their own ideas to create a library program for their students.

This attitude is in sharp contrast to one fifth grade teacher who said, “My entire schedule is fixed. How can I have one random blip in the week?” Three of the intermediate level teachers have found a way to take advantage of the “random blip” and use it to benefit their students. The librarian should use these teachers to advocate for program and its advantages for students. Certainly it is valuable to share the research on flexible scheduling with teachers (Hamilton-Pennell, Lance, Rodney and Hainer, 2000) but teachers may respond better to concrete examples from their peers.

This unique approach to flexible access has become for many teachers a variant of a fixed access program. A combination of in-service activities, librarian outreach,
principal involvement and teacher advocacy is needed to move this program in a new direction.
Conclusions

The guiding question of this exploratory study was: do teachers view the role of the school library differently based on scheduling? Current school library literature suggests that teachers using a successful flexible access model are more likely to view the school library as an extension of the classroom (Buchanan, 1991, p. 7).

Teachers from both fixed access and flexible access library programs participated in focus group discussions and, in one case, an individual interview. The goal of the discussions was to look for similarities and differences in the teachers’ attitudes about the school library as well as their ideas for needed changes. Differences were found, but not in the manner the researcher expected. Teachers expressed contrasting opinions based on how they wanted to use the school library, rather than their current situations.

School library literature suggests that teachers working in a fixed access school will not feel connected to the library program, that the library will be used primarily for released time and that library activities will not be correlated with classroom goals and objectives. This is how the five participants from the fixed school reported using the school library, but they also indicated this was not what they wanted. Their perception of the ideal school library program involves collaboration between the teacher and the librarian, point of need access for students and classroom extension through library activities. The reality of their school library is in sharp contrast to their vision of how the facility should be used.
Three of the ten teachers participants at the flexible school expressed the same opinions about the school library program. They value the opportunity to collaborate with the librarian on learning experiences for their students. The flexible access program suits their teaching styles. Thus, eight of the teachers involved in the study expressed the same view of the role of the school library program, although only three of them are currently working in the desired situation.

The other seven participants at the flexible school would prefer a return to a fixed program. They desire regular weekly visits, citing a lack of time in their schedule for either class visits or collaborative planning. They acknowledge that their students should have more library time and would like library staff to be responsible for planning and carrying out library activities.

Like the participants at the fixed school, the current program is not what these seven teachers prefer. Their perception of the ideal school library involves facets of the traditional fixed program: regular weekly visits for stories and library skills instruction that do not require teacher input or collaboration.

This study involved a small sampling of teachers and only two schools. Larger studies with a greater basis for comparison would determine if these views are widespread among educators. If the purpose of the school library is to help teachers do their jobs better, then further research is needed in what help teachers want. Turner (1996) reported on a workshop where teachers were invited to list the help they required and to brainstorm ideas of how the library program could facilitate their teaching. In addition, the teachers looked for ways in which they could help the librarian help them. Once this information has been collected from researchers it will be easier to see how the
library program can answer these needs and whether a fixed or flexible schedule is more appropriate.

It should be noted again that the flexible access program examined for this study is not typical due to the librarian’s themed programming. Mainstream flexible programs should be investigated to look at teacher acceptance rates and how implementation has been accomplished.
References


## Appendices

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Letter of Request to Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Letter of Request to School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Letter to Teacher Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Focus Group Consent Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Media Center Use Chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Observation Consent Form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A

Principal Letter of Request

Dear Principal,

In order to complete my Master’s Degree in Library Science and certification as a school library media coordinator at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I wish to conduct a study entitled “Teacher Perceptions of School Library Programs.” This study will involve focus groups with consenting teachers to assess their view of the role of the school library program. The results will provide school media specialists with an overview of teacher opinions and ideas about school library programming.

The study has two components. First, I will spend several days simply observing in the school library. My goal is to become familiar with the ways in which the library is used, the collection, and the instructional and programming opportunities. Based on these observations, I will design focus group questions to use with the teachers. Some of the areas I will explore include: How does the teacher utilize the school media center? Does the teacher view the media specialist as an instructional partner or as a resource person? Does the teacher feel the media center collection satisfies the needs of the curriculum? Is the teacher able to use the media center as he/she finds appropriate within the structure of the scheduling format? Are there changes the teacher would like to see?

Following the observation period, I will schedule focus groups with intermediate level teachers. The groups will last about 30 minutes. Participation is, of course, voluntary and teachers may withdraw from the study at any time. In the interest of accuracy, I will be audio-taping the sessions. All schools and teachers will remain anonymous in the final study and all notes and tapes will be destroyed following acceptance of the Master’s paper.

I have spoken with your school library media coordinator who has indicated a willingness to participate, pending your approval and that of the school district.

I am glad to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. You can reach me at 361-0496, or by email at westg@ils.unc.edu. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Evelyn Daniel, at 962-8366. This study has also be approved by the Institutional Review Board for human subjects research at the University. Guidelines and safeguards for this process are rigorous.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Daub Westman
Appendix B

School District Letter of Request

Name
Title
Address

Dear Name,

Please find enclosed a proposal for a research project I am submitting to you for approval. I am a student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This research project, entitled “Teacher Perceptions of School Media Programs,” is the culmination of my studies and when approved, will complete the requirements for a Master of Science in Library Science degree and for certification as a school library media coordinator.

Little has been written on how teachers view and utilize the resources of the school library. I hope that the results of this project will give school library media coordinators a clearer perspective on the needs and ideas of the teachers they serve.

This study will involve a period of observation in an elementary school media center in your district. This will be followed by focus groups with consenting teachers at the school in order to learn their views about school library programs.

I have spoken with Name, principal of School Name. She has indicated her willingness to host the project, pending approval from your department.

I am glad to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. You can reach me at 361-0496, or by email at westg@ils.unc.edu. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Evelyn Daniel, at 962-8366. This study has also be approved by the Institutional Review Board for human subjects research at the University. Guidelines and safeguards for this process are rigorous.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. Your prompt response is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Daub Westman
Teacher Letter

Dear Name:

As a follow-up to our conversation, I thank you for your interest in my research project entitled “Teacher Perceptions of School Library Programs.” This letter, and the attached consent form, will clarify the study process. It is my hope that the information gathered in this project will help school library media coordinators as they plan for the future.

As we discussed, your role in the study involves participating in a focus group with other third, fourth and fifth grade teachers. It will last approximately 30 minutes. For the sake of accuracy, I will audio-tape the interview in addition to taking notes. All notes and tapes will be destroyed at the end of the project and you will remain anonymous in the final paper.

Approval for the study has been granted by the school district as well as your principal. If you are willing to participate in the study, please read carefully the attached consent form. Two copies are included; please keep one for your own records and return a signed copy to me. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If at any time you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, you may contact the UNC-CH Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board:

Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board
Barbara Davis Goldman, Chair
CB#4100, 201 Bynum Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-4100
919/962-7761

You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Evelyn Daniel:

School of Information and Library Science
UNC-CH
CB#3360, Manning Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3360
919/962-8366

I thank you for your interest in this project and look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Daub Westman
Appendix D

Interview Consent Form

Introduction to the Study

- You are invited to participate in a study of the perceptions of teachers about school library media center programs.
- Gretchen Westman, a Master’s candidate at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Evelyn Daniel, faculty member at the School.

Purpose

- The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how classroom teachers view the role of the school library program within the learning community. This information will be helpful to school library media coordinators during future planning for growth or change of their programs.

How the Study Works

- You are being asked to participate in a focus group of approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked questions regarding your use of the school library, your view of the role of the school library media coordinator, your opinions about the collection and any ideas you have for changes or improvements.
- To ensure accuracy, the interviews will be tape-recorded in addition to written notes. All data will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- If you have questions or concerns about this study, please call Gretchen Westman at 361-0496 or email westg@ils.unc.edu. You may also contact Dr. Evelyn Daniel at 919/962-8062.

Privacy

- Your privacy is important. We will make every effort to protect your privacy.
- We will not use your name or other identifiable information in any research report. Your school and school district will not be identified.
- Tapes and written notes from the interviews will be destroyed when the study is finished.
- Since we will be making all efforts to ensure your privacy, we ask you to allow us to use the information gained through this study in any way we think best for publication.

Risks and Discomfort
• I do not know of any personal risk or discomfort you may incur from participating in this study.

**Your Rights as a Participant**

• It is your decision whether or not you want to participate in this study.
• If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

**Institutional Review Board Approval**

This study has been approved by the UNC-Chapel Hill Institutional Review Board. If at any time you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, you may contact the UNC-CH Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board:

Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board  
Barbara Davis Goldman, Chair  
CB#4100, 201 Bynum Hall  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-4100  
919/962-7761

You may also contact the IRB through an email address set up specifically for study participants. That address is aa-irb@unc.edu.

**Consent**

• I understand that this is a research study to learn about teacher perceptions of school library media programs.
• I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the study and they have been answered to my satisfaction.
• I have read the consent form and I agree to be in the study. I have been given an additional copy of this form for my own records. I will return this signed copy to the investigator.

_______________________________________           __________________________  
Signature of Participant                    Date
## Media Center Use Chart

### School:

### Week of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wed.</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30-7:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:50-8:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:10-8:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-8:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50-9:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10-9:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-9:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50-10:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10-10:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-10:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:50-11:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:10-11:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-11:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:50-12:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:10-12:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-12:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:50-1:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10-1:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-1:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50-2:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10-2:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Observation Consent Form

Introduction to the Study

- You are invited to participate in a study of the perceptions of teachers about school library media center programs.
- Gretchen Westman, a Master’s candidate at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Evelyn Daniel, faculty member at the School.

Purpose

- The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how classroom teachers view the role of the school library program within the learning community. This information will be helpful to school library media coordinators during future planning for growth or change of their programs.

How the Study Works

- You are being asked to allow the researcher to observe in your school media center for one week. The data to be collected includes numbers of students and faculty using the media center, types of activities, any special programming offered, circulation numbers, and a general description of the collection.
- If you have questions or concerns about this study, please call Gretchen Westman at 361-0496 or email westg@ils.unc.edu. You may also contact Dr. Evelyn Daniel at 919/962-8062.

Privacy

- Your privacy is important. We will make every effort to protect your privacy.
- We will not use your name or other identifiable information in any research report. Your school and school district will not be identified.
- Since we will be making all efforts to ensure your privacy, we ask you to allow us to use the information gained through this study in any way we think best for publication.

Risks and Discomfort

- I do not know of any personal risk or discomfort you may incur from participating in this study.
Your Rights as a Participant

- It is your decision whether or not you want to participate in this study.
- If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Institutional Review Board Approval

This study has been approved by the UNC-Chapel Hill Institutional Review Board. If at any time you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, you may contact the UNC-CH Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board:

Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board
Barbara Davis Goldman, Chair
CB#4100, 201 Bynum Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-4100
919/962-7761

You may also contact the IRB through an email address set up specifically for study participants. That address is aa-irb@unc.edu.

Consent

- I understand that this is a research study to learn about teacher perceptions of school library media programs.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the study and they have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I have read the consent form and I agree to be in the study. I have been given an additional copy of this form for my own records. I will return this signed copy to the investigator.

_______________________________________           ___________________________
Signature of Participant                    Date