

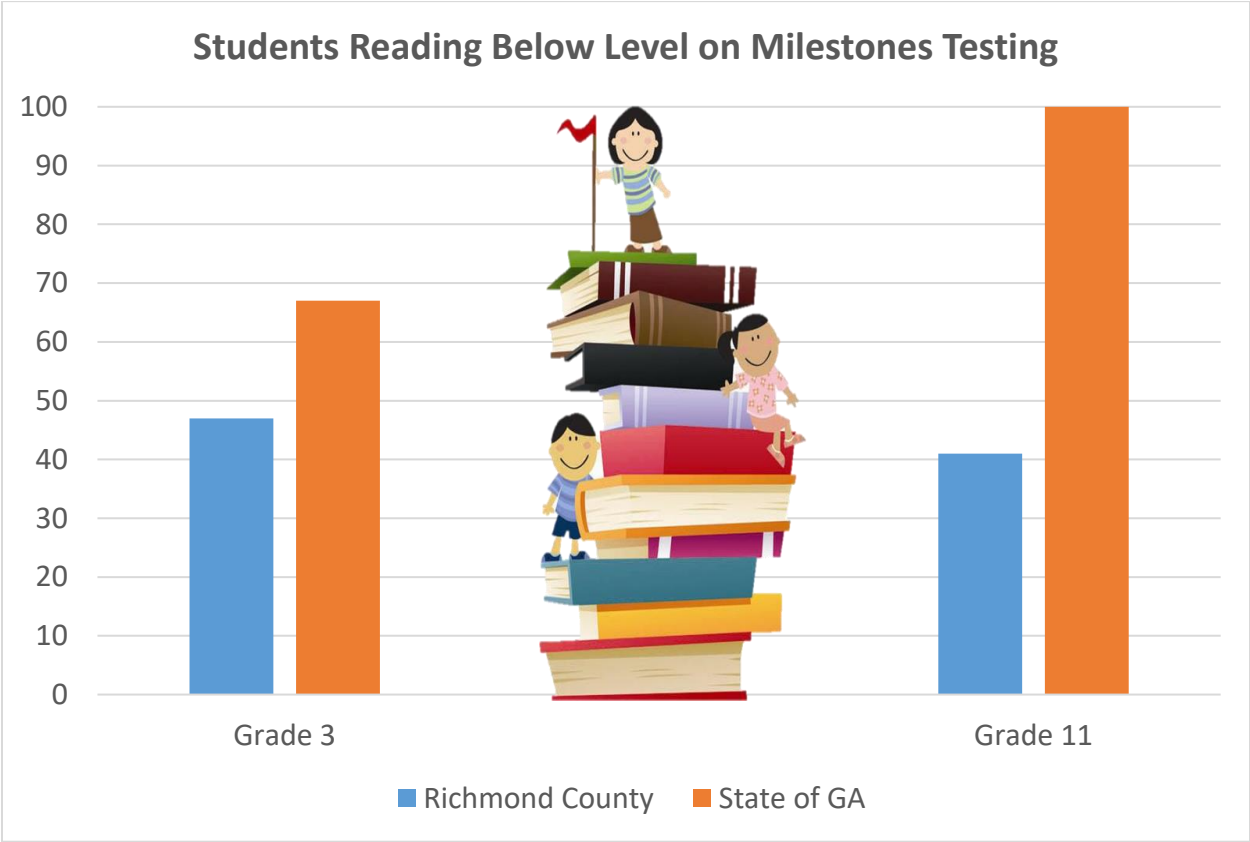


LEVERAGING SCHOOL LIBRARIES FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**A Proposal for Best Practices in Media Centers
for the
Richmond County School System**

THE FACTS

There is a direct correlation between high-quality school Media Centers and students' improved test scores, which cannot be explained away by other school or community factors. Low-income students show the greatest gains in test scores in schools with high-quality Media Center programs. These conclusions are supported by a large body of research from 25 states and Ontario conducted over two and a half decades (Francis, Lance, and Lietzau, 2010; Scholastic, 2016).



Currently, as measured by Georgia Milestones, 47% of 3rd graders and 41% of 11th graders in Richmond County are reading below grade level. Schools do not utilize nor leverage media centers effectively to positively impact students' reading achievement.

Students perform better on achievement tests where the schools' Media Centers have:

- ✓ More full-time equivalents of staffing
- ✓ Higher total library expenditures
- ✓ Heavier use as measured by both library visits and circulation
- ✓ Larger collection of periodicals, instructional videos
- ✓ Better networked online resources

Although there is evidence that media programs lead to increased circulation and improved reading outcomes, schools are not leveraging media centers for student achievement. It comes down to the lack of:

Utilization of Media Center

Teachers may not make the best use of the school Media Center.

- Teachers, under pressure to improve test scores, are reluctant to "give up" instructional time.
- Teachers send students to the Media Center to get a break.

Collaboration

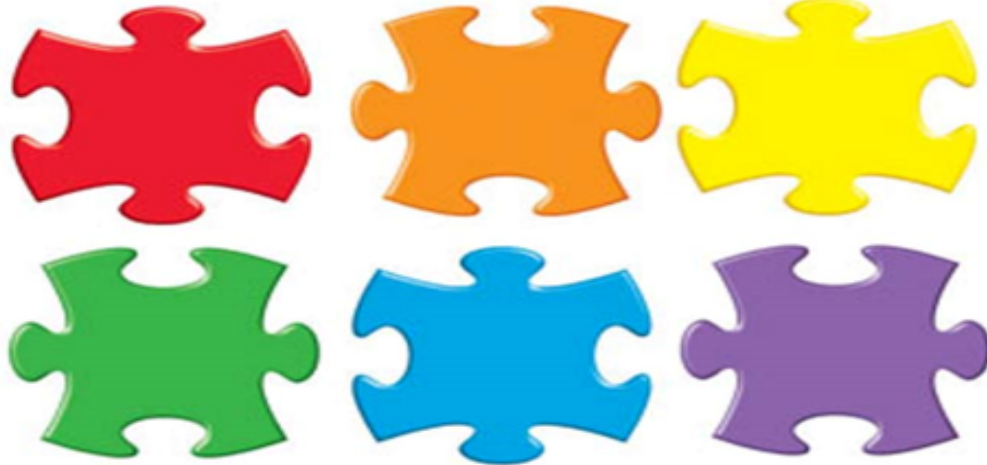
When collaboration between Teachers and Media Specialists does not occur, Media Center visits and circulation decreases.

- Library instruction is superfluous to content standards.
- Teachers fear increased workloads.

Collection Development

Library materials need to be up-to-date and aligned with the curriculum as well as include books for students' personal reading pleasure.

- Many collections are out-of-date.
- Need more high interest, low Lexile leveled books to help students become interested in reading.



Expectations of Media Specialists

Media Specialists are expected to support the curriculum through collaboration with Teachers, teaching in the Media Center, and collection development.

- Not all Media Specialists have been teachers. They require training in lesson planning and teaching skills.
- Media Specialists who have to perform other duties have to close the Media Center so it is unavailable during key times.

Administrative Support

Principals must see the importance of the library media program to the success of the school.

- Principals must be advocates for the Media Center and for collaboration between Media Specialists and teachers.
- Principals should use MKES to help foster a high-quality Media program.

Implementing Best Practices

Principals, Teachers, and Media Specialists must agree and implement best practices to support their school's needs.

- Media Specialists should meet with Principals to discuss programming.
- Media Specialists must communicate with faculty, staff, and students so all stakeholders are aware of events and materials.

THE BEST FIT

Flexible scheduling of the Media Center is best practice, advocated by the American Association of School Libraries (AASL), and currently mandated by Georgia and district policy. Although fixed schedules may ensure that each class visits the library each week, fixed schedules do not guarantee collaboration or a high-quality library program. The issue is not scheduling, "but rather good practice versus bad practice and how to best build the structures that underlie excellence in school library media programming" (Hurley, 2004, p. 36).



[American Association of School Librarians Position Statement on Flexible Scheduling](#)

Classes must be flexibly scheduled to visit the school library on an as-needed basis to facilitate just-in-time research, training, and the use of technology with the guidance of the teacher, who is the subject specialist, and the librarian, who is the information-search process specialist. The lesson plans resulting from this collaboration recognize that the length of the learning experience is dependent on learning needs rather than a fixed library period. Regularly scheduled classes in the school library to provide teacher release time or preparation time prohibits this best practice. Students and teachers must be able to come to the school library throughout the day to use information sources, read for pleasure, and collaborate with other students and teachers (adopted 09/2011, revised 06/2014) (American Association of School Librarians, 2018)



The decision to implement flexible, fixed, or mixed Media Center schedules should be based on the school's mission statement, school improvement plan, students' needs, and best practices. Media Center scheduling should be a school-based decision that is grounded in instructional goals for the students, not convenience for adults (Moreillon, 2014). For instance, an elementary school may determine that a mixed schedule best provides weekly story times for Pre-K through 2nd and point-of-need access for grades 3 through 5.

Regardless of the schedule, through best practices in collaboration, professional learning, communication, and collection development, school Media Centers are leveraged to positively impact student achievement. The Media Center becomes the learning hub of the school.



THAT FINAL PIECE

Students obtain higher test scores in schools where Principals value best practices:

- Flexibly scheduled access to the Media Center
- Collaboration between the Media Specialist and classroom Teachers
- Provision of in-service professional learning to Teachers by the Media Specialist
- Appointment of the Media Specialist to key school committees
- Regular meetings between the Media Specialist and the Principal (Francis, Lance, and Lietzau, 2010).



Best Practices: Collaboration

- Teachers and Media Specialists collaborate to meet both curricular and information literacy standards.
- Teachers remain with their classes during collaborative lessons in the Media Center.
- Media Specialists participate in team and content area planning.
- Schedules provide time for collaborative planning.
- Media Specialists co-teach with Teachers on research skills.
- Media Specialists participate in school leaderships teams.
- Media Specialists work with school library or literacy committees to develop, implement and promote the school Media Center mission and program, contribute to the school improvement plan, and support curricular and reading goals.

Best Practices: Professional Development

- Media Specialists receive Professional Learning for lesson planning and implementation; how to use Rubicon Atlas, and best practices for teaching.
- Teachers participate in Professional Learning to learn the curricular role of the school library program; how to use the library as a resource to support instruction; and how to use the media program for differentiation.
- Principals receive Professional Learning on the curricular role of the school librarian; how collaboration can improve learning outcomes; the research on how high-quality library programs.
- Media Specialists provide Professional Learning to Teachers and Administrators on:
 - How high-quality library programs increase student achievement
 - The link between access to books and increased literacy
 - Collaboration
 - How the library supports differentiation.

Best Practices: Communication

- Principals communicate to Teachers clear expectations for Media Center use, check out, and collaboration.
- Principals familiarize themselves with MKES in order to have greater understanding of Media Specialists' roles and responsibilities.
- Principals advocate for the Media Center, Media Specialists, and collection.
- Media Specialists meet regularly with Principals to discuss the media program and steps taken to make the Media Center the learning hub of the school.
- Media Specialists communicate to Teachers curricular resources, opportunities and ideas for collaboration, and support for Teachers' goals.
- District Media Program Specialist communicates to Principals expectations for collaboration and curricular role of Media Specialists.

Best Practices: Collection Development

- The School System makes budgetary support for updating school Media Centers a priority.
- Media Specialists use professional, state, and system guidelines to weed books and develop the collection.
- Collection is aligned to curriculum standards and promotes literacy through independent reading.
- Media Specialists assist students and Teachers in finding books at appropriate Lexile levels. (Organizing the collection by Lexile level is not best practice nor is it practical given that MARC records do not always contain Lexile information.)
- Media Specialists curate periodicals and digital resources that support the curriculum



THE HURDLES

- All schedules, especially fixed, need to allow time for Media Specialists' behind-the-scenes duties.
- All schedules, especially fixed, should allow 2-3 weeks at the beginning and end of the school year for check-out/check-in of textbooks, resources, teacher materials, and equipment.
- Teachers and administrators need to change their mindsets about the school library program. The school climate must be conducive to collaboration.
- Some Media Specialist may feel uncomfortable collaborating or teaching. Professional learning and mentoring will address this issue.
- Principals are very busy and inundated with information. Communication with principals must be timely, succinct, and to the point.
- The lack of support staff in the media center hinders a high-quality media program.

THE PERKS

Of Best Practices

- ✔ The number of students reading on grade level will increase.
- ✔ Students' scores on Milestones and other measures of learning (e.g. Lexile levels) will improve.
- ✔ Access to the media center for all students and teachers will be increased.
- ✔ Students will become more aware of resources available in the library.
- ✔ Students will see the library as an extension of the classroom and a place to pursue personal interests.
- ✔ Circulation will be increased.
- ✔ Utilization of the media center will be increased.
- ✔ Students will inculcate a love of reading.
- ✔ Students will become more effective users of information.

Citations

- American Association of School Librarians. (2018). *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. Chicago: ALA Editions.
- Francis, B. R., Lance, K. C., & Lietzau, Z. (2010). *School Librarians Continue to Help Students Achieve Standards: The Third Colorado Study (2010)*. Retrieved from https://www.lrs.org/documents/closer_look/CO3_2010_Closer_Look_Report.pdf
- Gavigan, K., Pribesh, S. & Dickinson, G. (2010). Fixed or Flex schedule? Schedule impacts and school library circulation. *Library and Information Science Research*, 32, 131-7.
- Hurley, C. A. (2004). Fixed vs. Flexible scheduling in school library media centers: A continuing debate. *Library Media Connection*, 23(3), 36-41.
- Krashen, S. (1993). *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research*. Englewood Cliffs, CO; Libraries Unlimited.
- McGregor, J. (2006). Flexible scheduling: Implementing an innovation. *School Library Media Research*, 9, 1-27.
- McGregor, J. (2002). Flexible scheduling: How does a principal facilitate implementation? *School Libraries Worldwide* 8.1, 71-84.
- Miller, M. & Shontz, M. (2003). The SLJ spending survey: While funding takes a hit, libraries expand their services. *School Library Journal*, 49(10), 52-59.
- Moreillon, J. (2014, April). Leadership: Fixed, flexible, and mixed library scheduling. *School Library Monthly*, 30(7), 25-26.
- Scholastic. (2016). *School Libraries Work! A Compendium of Research Supporting the Effectiveness of School Libraries*. Scholastic Publishing. Retrieved from <http://www.scholastic.com/sl2016/>
- Shannon, D. (1996). Tracking the transition to a flexible access library program in two Library Power elementary schools. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 24(3), 155-63.
- Van Deusan, J. D. (1993). The effects of fixed versus flexible scheduling on curriculum involvement and skill integration in elementary school library media programs. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 21(3), 173-82.
- Van Deusan, J. D. & Tallman, J. I. (1994). The impact of scheduling on curriculum consultation and information skills instruction. Part one: The 1993-94 AASL/Highsmith Research Award study. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 23 (1), 17-25.