

LIBRARY MEDIA PROGRAMS AND FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

As the 2007-2008 school year begins, library media specialists across Alabama should have the opportunity to be recognized as partners in the education of all students. In more than 60 studies that have been conducted (“School Libraries Work! http://www.scholastic.com/librarians/printables/downloads/slw_2006.pdf) in the United States, there is substantial evidence of a connection between student achievement and good school library media programs with qualified library media specialists. One of the components included in a successful library media program is flexible scheduling.

Flexible scheduling in Alabama has many different faces and local conditions can limit the incorporation of flexible scheduling. Certain school media centers have some fixed classes, usually for younger age students, with older students on a flexible schedule. Others have no fixed weekly scheduled classes. These media centers truly have a flexible schedule in that teachers and students use the library at their point or time of need. “The integrated library media program philosophy requires that an open schedule must be maintained. Classes cannot be scheduled in the library media center to provide teacher release or preparation time. Students and teachers must be able to come to the center throughout the day to use information sources, to read for pleasure, and to meet and work with other students and teachers” (American Library Association, www.ala.org, 2007).

How can local school systems be change agents for flexible scheduling? The American Library Association advocates that the entire school community needs to support the concept of flexible scheduling. The system Board of Education must endorse and ensure flexible scheduling is maintained. The District Administration ensures that appropriate staffing is in place. The Principal is an advocate for the benefits of flexible scheduling and monitors the library media center schedule. The Teacher views the library media center and the media specialist as an integral part of the school curriculum. The Media Specialist is knowledgeable about curriculum and collaborates with teachers. If these partners realize the benefits of an exemplary library media program and support each other in that process, Alabama’s students will achieve at a higher level.