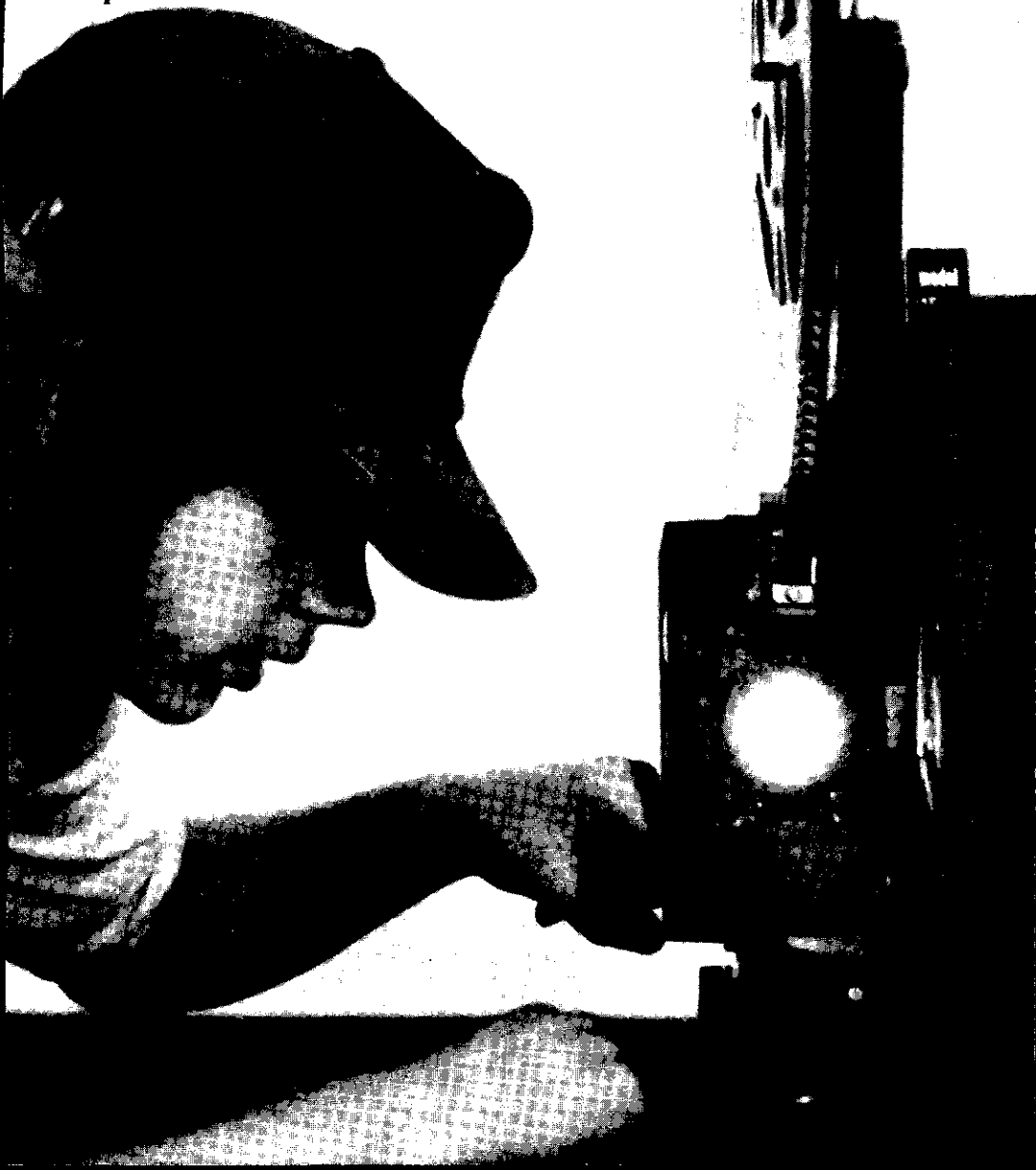


HOOSIER

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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The cover picture by Robert DeFrance features Scott Morris from the Indiana State University Laboratory School.

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Indiana and the 1975 Standards for District Programs

by
Mrs. Virginia L. Hershman
&
Dr. David V. Loertscher

Media Programs: District and School, the 1975 standards, are here! They continue the concern for establishing guidelines for excellence in media programs. In the "Introduction" the purpose is clearly stated: "The publication focuses on qualitative goals, offering criteria for district and school media programs that make exemplary educational experiences available to children and youth. It describes programs designed to respond to both district and school objectives and reflects the vital interrelationships between those operations. ...All of the recommendations apply to public and parochial school systems and to independent schools."¹ The title itself emphasizes the importance of district media programs and implies that, for quality programs, school and district efforts must be interwoven.

With respect to district media programs, where do we stand in Indiana? Does every school corporation have a district media director or supervisor? Do corporations provide central processing? Is production carried out at the district level? Is the budget coordinated? Is there a district selection policy that insures intellectual freedom? Are there district collections of special materials and equipment?

Obviously Indiana runs the gamut from districts with no programs whatsoever to fully operational district programs. With such diversity how can the guidelines and recommendations of the 1975 standards be utilized by every Indiana school district to achieve educational excellence?

The district media staff looks at the total educational program of the corporation; establishes policies; and makes decisions in regard to the overall goals, the allocation of resources, and instructional design to meet curriculum needs for that particular district. At the district level, priorities are set and alternatives considered in order to utilize resources and people effectively. However, each school within a district is unique, so the facilities, collection, and personnel should reflect this individuality. The programs are designed to meet the needs of the users of each particular school, thereby requiring flexibility in overall planning at the district level.

The district director understands the curriculum and assists the school media specialist to be the right hand of the teacher in instructional development. The district director develops a good rapport with administrators in order to promote understanding of media programs and close working relationships.

Suppose a district has no supervisor and each media specialist operates alone. The new standards provide guidelines that can be put to use in every school corporation. If no formal district media structure exists, then an informal one should be developed. Why can't school media specialists from the entire corporation as well as the private and parochial schools in the area meet once a month or as often as necessary to talk over problems, policies, and goals pertinent to the individual school centers? Teachers often interact with colleagues within the building, but media specialists lack this opportunity and so often feel alone.

From informal discussions, goals and objectives that affect the entire school corporation will evolve. A chairman could be chosen for the year by an election or by a process of rotation. The smallest school districts may operate just as effectively with cooperative leadership. Some informal meetings may take place to discuss overall curriculum with the administrator in charge of curriculum development. Since media programs do not exist in a vacuum but as a part of the curriculum, both areas should be knowledgeable and work cooperatively. At the time of textbook adoption one person from the group, if not each media specialist, could be a part of the committee. Perhaps the media specialist with a specific subject area expertise could be selected for that textbook adoption subcommittee.



With or without a supervisor, media specialists can develop an overall plan for library and audiovisual skill instruction which provides for individual differences. For example, all the elementary children who feed into a common junior high can have similar learning experiences and library skills development. The junior high school media specialist should know what to expect the students to have learned, realizing that some re-teaching may be necessary. A handbook of sequential instruction or policy manual might be developed. Certainly having a district director would expedite these matters and would provide many services for the group. Obviously more can be accomplished along these lines with a district staff because building level specialists would be adding this work to an already full day.

One of the top priorities of every school district should be establishment of a selection policy for the entire corporation.

The media selection policy reflects basic factors influencing the nature and scope of collections, such as curriculum trends, innovations in instruction, research in learning, availability of materials and equipment, the increased sophistication of youth, and the rising

*expectations of teachers and students. It establishes the objectives of media selection; identifies personnel participating in selection and their roles; enumerates types of materials and equipment to be considered with criteria for their evaluation, as well as criteria for evaluating materials in specific subject areas; and defines procedures followed in selecting materials, including initial selection, reexamination of titles in existing collections, and handling challenged titles.*²

The district media director should be the leader and coordinator for the adoption of this policy. However, even an informal group should insist that the school board adopt a selection policy that will be suitable for the entire school corporation. Whether or not there is a district staff, there will need to be input from teachers, administrators, students, media personnel, and community members.

The need for such a policy has been so aptly demonstrated by the recent invasion of a school library at night by school board members for the purpose of removing objectionable materials from the collection.³ With school board and community involvement in the formulation of a selection policy, such incidents certainly will be much less likely to occur. If they do occur, the media specialist has the backing of those who were involved in the adoption of the selection policy.

In addition to program planning and selection policy formulation, the district director is involved in the budgeting, ordering, purchasing, processing, and accounting procedures for the entire school corporation.

The budget is the financial plan for the entire media program, which includes the individual school media programs and the district level programs as well as allocations for regional centers such as film libraries or processing centers. The financial plan is developed to meet the objectives of the curriculum. When new topics are to be added to the courses of study, new teaching techniques to be utilized, or new media centers to be opened, the budget for materials and equipment for the entire media program reflects these changes. Title IV-B funds are intended to provide an impact on certain program needs. It will be easy to use Title IV-B effectively if the entire budget is program oriented.

Centralized purchasing of materials, equipment, and supplies may result in the best possible price. However, quality and warranty servicing should be considered. The choice of a jobber or jobbers should not in any way restrict the individuality of the school media programs. The bid system may be required for the purchasing of equipment but should be avoided for the purchasing of books and software. The district program supplies evaluations of equipment through the "Library Technology Reports" of the American Library Association or other sources, arranges for demonstrations, and provides specifications for bid procedures.

Not only is centralized ordering and purchasing a tremendous time saver for the individual school media specialist, but so also is centralized processing of materials and equipment. In Indiana many school districts do provide centralized processing for the individual media centers. What a help it is to have items arrive ready for use! If these centralized technical services cannot be made available for a school district because of its size, multi-district processing, contractually arranged, may be the answer. Care must be exercised, however, to see that these services increase the speed and quality of cataloging available prior to their implementation. Centralized services seem to be a place to start in the development of a district program.

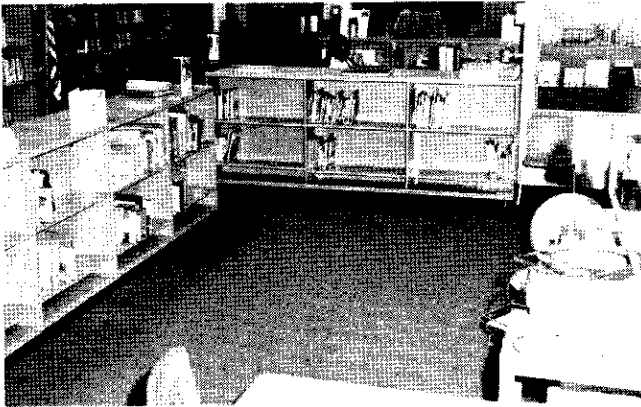
Collection developments should be viewed as a whole not just the sum of the parts. Each individual school media center builds its collection emphasizing the curriculum areas to meet the needs of the users of that particular school. However, the district media center provides an additional collection of materials of a specialized nature. The district collection can circulate expensive materials--16mm films, models,

videotapes, or little used items. Rather than having segmented or duplicated professional libraries in each school, why not have an extensive and useful professional library housed in the district center with space for its use? With no district director why not develop a master list of materials that could be easily shared by two or more centers? Why not a master shelf list of professional materials and items too expensive to duplicate for the entire school corporation?

Preview and selection centers should be established so that every media professional in the state has reasonable access to this service. In Indiana it is not always feasible for every district to have a center but certainly regional centers or some type of contractual arrangement with an established, centrally located facility are possibilities.

Production at the district level does not replace individual school production but extends the possibilities. The facilities and staff at each individual school will dictate the amount and type of production done at the district level. Perhaps only facilities to produce transparencies, some simple graphics and photography (such as the Kodak Visualmaker) are necessary in each school. If darkroom facilities are not available at each school, this type of service could be carried out by district production personnel. Kits could be designed and assembled using components from the district collection. Television programs can be made available from the district center as permitted by copyright laws. Tape duplicating within copyright regulations may occur at the district media center.

Another type of service provided by a district program is planning for new or remodeled facilities. The district director and the school's media specialist use their combined experiences to design an area that will be efficient, comfortable and pleasant. Working with an architect is within the expertise of a district director who may also have the influence necessary to see that the design is carried out.



To develop and maintain a total district media program, it is essential to have an adequate media staff. Depending on the types of activities, different competencies are needed. A director supported by secretarial assistance would be responsible for the planning and administrative functions. Other staff members with appropriate expertise would be concerned with production, equipment repair, processing of materials, or managing selecting and preview areas. If the district is small and a district staff is not possible, could other types of arrangements be made? Could several school corporations in a relatively small geographical area make contractual arrangements to handle processing of materials or the repair of equipment or even some types of production?

The district media director provides opportunities for continuing education or staff development of all media personnel. He assembles information about workshops, service, and professional meetings that will interest the media staff. He also encourages attendance and participation in professional organizations and conferences. The media director may actually engage in presenting in-service media training for media staff or teachers. If the district has no director or supervisor, why not try informal brainstorming sessions to produce ideas? Participate in as many area, state, regional, and national meetings as possible, and share ideas and new approaches over lunch! Get on the mailing lists of the universities in Indiana in order to attend credit courses or workshops. More importantly, help university educators by making suggestions for needed workshop or course topics.

Evaluation is the key to improvement. Media specialists never rest on their laurels but constantly strive to better their programs. Evaluation is necessary to see how well the goals and objectives have been met. Evaluation by district director, by students, by teachers, and by members of the community is an ongoing procedure. In addition, outside evaluations from a totally objective source should be undertaken.

To decide if a media program is a quality program, judge it by what the user is actually doing and learning; not by counting the number of classes using the center or the number of students who visit the media center per week. Make judgments concerning who is taking advantage of the services provided by the media center and see to it that all have the opportunity to use these services. Evaluate from the standpoint of how the materials are being used.

This is not to say we shouldn't keep records, but that we should judge the quality of the media program by the way the center is used. Are the students using a variety of materials to learn? Are they using the card catalog, indexes, abstracts, or computer searches to locate information? Are the students finding materials at their reading and interest levels in a format that appeals to them? Are they enjoying and appreciating various forms of communicating--reading, listening, viewing? Are the users being helped to use and also produce learning materials and projects? The users include not only the students but also the teachers, the media staff, and, if possible, the community.

The professionals at the district level assume the responsibility for coordinating the public relations aspect of the media program. The community will support the media program it understands. Keep the school board informed. Let the community know about the media program. Encourage the citizens to visit the media center. Involve parents in some of the activities. Use radio, television, and the press to inform the public. Even without a district director, each individual school media center should, through bulletins and letters, provide as much information as possible.

The main concern of *Media Programs: District and School* is the "quality of the educational experience for the learner."⁴ With these guidelines and recommendations, the district and school media programs together provide a positive impact on each user of the media center. Certainly this can be accomplished if the district hires a full media staff, but, even when this is not possible, informal working relationships can go a long way to improving the entire program.

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