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ABSTRACT

The media program plays a direct and important role in the reading program in the Groton Public Schools, functioning in a close relationship with the classroom to promote student reading in several ways. The media center provides easy access to a variety of interesting materials for students to use in practicing the reading skills learned in the classroom. The media specialist, whose educational background includes a study of children's and adolescent literature, is able to provide reading guidance to the individual student and to promote the study of literature through story hours, book discussions, and the preparation of reading lists. Supplementary print and non-print materials are distributed to improve classroom instruction. Part of the media program is devoted to more effective use of media, including mass media, in the curriculum. When student interest in various topics is stimulated by television, the school media program provides materials for followup reading on these subjects. The media center serves as a stimulus to change and innovation in the classroom by introducing new programs in reading and other subject fields. (Author/SL)

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GROTON, CONNECTICUT

THE MEDIA PROGRAM IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE READING PROGRAM

The media program plays a direct and important role in the reading program in the Groton Public Schools. Originally school libraries were viewed primarily as a source of outside reading for book reports; in the media center program the relationship to the reading program goes far beyond this narrow scope. The media program functions in a close relationship to the classroom reading program to help promote student reading in eight ways:

I. Supplying a wealth of printed materials for students to use to practice and improve skills they have learned in the classroom.

Learning the mechanics of reading does not guarantee that a person will become a reader. The desire and interest in reading must be fostered by easy access to a variety of materials of interest to each individual reader. These materials are readily available through the school media center. The book, pamphlet, and periodical collection in each school has been chosen to provide quality materials that will be challenging and absorbing for the student, subject to budget limitations. Rotating collections are loaned to classrooms so that students may be surrounded by books, and students are encouraged to visit the media centers when they are staffed to seek materials of interest to read. For a number of years, our media centers have been developing collections of carefully selected paperback books, recognizing the good response students show toward this format. Research shows that children who have continuous access to good school library collections administered by a full time professional generally read two to three times as many items in a greater variety of literary forms than do children who have access only to classroom collections or to centralized collections without professional personnel. John Hersey, the well-known Connecticut author, commented that "school is where the book habit grows, if ever it does, and elementary school is where the habit is born, if at all." It is essential to provide many books in the schools where all children have easy access to them; we cannot rely upon students to find their outside reading outside the school.

II. Furnishing direct reading guidance to students

The media specialist, whose educational background includes a study of children's and adolescent literature, is able to provide guidance in reading for individual students, based on the needs and capabilities of each student. Materials are carefully selected to supply a collection that will interest the students and motivate them to read. Reading guidance or advice in selecting books to read and help in interpreting and discussing what students have read, is given on an individual basis and in groups through book talks, book discussions, and similar activities. The media specialist strives to help each student develop his potential through reading. The summer program, in which eight media centers have been open for use, has enabled the media specialist to give individual attention to children on a year-round basis as well as maintaining an interest in reading through the vacation period.

III. Utilizing background in children's and adolescent literature in the reading program

With the background and interest of the media specialist in these areas of literature and the opportunity to discuss books and recommend reading to students, the media specialist plays a key role in promoting a study of literature. From the storytelling and story reading activities for the primary grades to the assistance in developing a recommended reading list for a senior high school class, the media specialist has a part in teaching literature appreciation to students. Each media

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specialist includes activities in this area in the planned program at various levels. The Media Services Center works in the development of bibliographies of recommended reading to correlate with the various curriculum areas, and sets up book exhibits throughout the year to give wider coverage for outstanding books.

#### IV. Providing materials to supplement the texts in the reading program

The media center has many materials which are used in the reading program in the classroom. These materials range from tapes and filmstrips on phonics to recordings of poetry and educational games related to reading skills, and includes the actual books used for individualized and enrichment reading. The basal reading program we are using in the schools recommends that at least once a week, the reading class should use supplementary library materials in place of the textbook for the reading lesson; research with this reading program in other school systems shows that students make greater progress in reading skill development when these outside materials and activities are an integral part of the reading instruction. The media specialist, with a knowledge of materials, is able to recommend media that can be used in the reading program on all levels. Many materials are provided through the media center for remedial work in reading, for special education needs, and for challenging gifted readers.

#### V. Finding materials for reading in the content areas such as science and social studies

Since reading is a key to success in other subject fields, it is important to provide materials to match the interests and abilities of students in various curriculum areas. Supplementary materials are provided for all students by the media center, and in some cases these materials replace the textbook as reading matter. The textbook is geared to the average student, while the media specialist can locate curriculum-related materials for the poor reader and the gifted pupil so that each can expand his or her knowledge and contribute to class work in subject fields. Last year one of our schools received a Right to Read grant to provide this type of materials for reading in social studies; the grant was one of four which was developed cooperatively by teachers and media specialists in our schools. Media center materials often serve as the required reading in elective courses in the secondary schools. Media center materials are used to stimulate critical reading and analysis of subject matter and to encourage research work in the content areas. Provision of varied materials is one reason why students with media centers and professional staff show greater educational gain in subject fields than students without these resources, as proven by educational research studies.

#### VI. Capitalizing on student interest in other media to promote reading

Part of the media program is devoted to more effective use of media, including mass media, in the curriculum. Students' interest in various topics from athletics and astronauts to King Henry VIII are stimulated by television; the school media program provides materials for follow-up reading on these subjects. The interrelationship of media is stressed as students view a film or filmstrip or listen to a recording and then read the book from which they are made. Sesame Street and The Electric Company have proved the value of other media in teaching reading skills to children. Our film appreciation program has important ramifications for reading, and students must read to respond to questions raised by media viewing. Student production of media such as filmstrips, tapes, and videotapes, requires reading to acquire and organize background information which will be used. To cite another example, many schools have a tape listening program in which beginning readers follow the text of a paperback book while they listen to the story and then answer questions based on their listening. We cannot have an effective reading program today without recognition of the importance of other media to today's students.

### VII. Stimulating independent study projects in many areas

In independent study, students research a topic to pose and answer questions that meet specified objectives and to broaden their understanding of the subject. The media specialist guides the students in the development of study and reference skills which are needed for effective use of independent study time and assists in the location of materials which are suitable for the student's study. Guidance in the critical use of media is needed by many students; the amount of direct supervision and assistance is decreased until students are truly involved in independent study. Our independent study program begins in the elementary school, and some students develop very sophisticated study skills before they go to junior high school. Secondary schools can build on the background of independent study to help students prepare for a lifetime of learning.

### VIII. Initiating innovative reading activities on a pilot project basis

The media center serves as a stimulus to change and innovation in the classroom by introducing new programs in reading and other fields. As these programs are adopted by classroom teachers and become incorporated into classroom routines, the media specialist moves on to another program. Our tape teaching program began in the media center due to the nature of the media and the need to share scarce equipment among many classes. Phonics, tapes, tapes for teaching listening and other reading skills, and tapes for motivating outside reading have been produced by media specialists who have then encouraged and helped teachers to make tapes to meet their own teaching objectives. Commercial tapes have been acquired to augment this program, although in many cases our homemade tapes are superior and were available first. In Groton the individualized reading program began in the media center as a supplementary program; it has moved into the classroom in many schools. Use of tapes and cassettes to give an aural interpretation of the book that accompanies them has gone from a media center activity to the classroom; some are now being circulated for home use as a further extension of the program. Independent study, use of volunteers in the reading program, student tutors, use of educational games, taped student reports, and other student-produced media are other programs that were inaugurated in the media center and are now moving into the rest of the school. Even the open classroom with its emphasis on self-selection, self-discipline, and independent study had its precursor in the browsing and research functions of the media center. We have had "open" media centers for a long time. As former Commissioner of Education for the State of Connecticut, William J. Sanders stated, "It is the school, above all, that serves the most children, and it is the well-stocked school library, managed or "taught" by a trained library-teacher, that will weigh in the balance. Although the school is frequently criticized for attempting to replace the home in many ways, few critics of the school will deny that its function is being fulfilled through the encouragement of the habit of wide reading. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the schools have excellent libraries and the expense involved will be less in proportion to what is accomplished than for any other expenditure." Development of a media program with professional staff and adequate materials is a very cost-effective way of promoting reading in our schools and will enhance the study of every subject in the educational program.

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