

A Team Approach For Improved Instruction

by J. Foster Watkins & Jane Bandy Smith

Someone in each school must be responsible for coordinating the staff's efforts to improve instruction. In its 1982-83 standards, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools initiated the requirement that a staff member be designated to provide such coordination. Considering the current budget strain faced by most schools, it is unlikely someone will be hired to serve in this capacity, so it seems sensible to delegate these responsibilities to someone already working in the school. It should be someone who knows the faculty and students, is informed about the school's total instructional program, and knows its goals and objectives.

The principal is the first person to come to mind who fits all those requirements. However, today's principals have so many managerial responsibilities that they have little time or energy to spend in the traditional role of "principal teacher." Another person in the school who fits the requirements of a school-based instructional improvement coordinator is the school's media specialist. We propose an approach to coordination of instruction improvement that combines the efforts and skills of both the principal and the media specialist. But how would this arrangement work?

How the Team Would Work

There are seven responsibilities of an instructional improvement coordinator that we identified through a survey of professional literature. These seven are:

1. Recruiting, assigning, and scheduling personnel;
2. Evaluating teachers;
3. Defining and articulating school goals;
4. Establishing communication with the school constituency;
5. Developing the curriculum;
6. Planning and analyzing instruction with teachers;
7. Providing staff development.

By analyzing this list, it is possible to determine which team member should have primary responsibility for each of the seven activities and which member should provide support. Items one and two involved personnel management, so the principal would have primary responsibility for these activities with the media specialist providing support. The principal would also provide leadership for items three and four, although these would be the responsibility of the total school staff. Items five through seven are consultative activities in which the media specialist could be delegated primary responsibili-

ty and would be supported by the principal.

It must be emphasized from the outset that this proposal is made with the full realization that the principal will still be ultimately responsible for seeing that instructional coordination is provided. He or she would delegate, not abdicate, responsibilities to be shared by the school's media specialist. Such an approach would allow principals to extend their leadership through more creative use of personnel, yet not diminish their influence.

Elements for Success

There are four important elements which can help ensure that the team approach to instructional improvement will work. First, if the media specialist is to assume primary responsibility for the three consultative activities, he or she must be relieved of many of the routine clerical tasks involved in operating the media center. Therefore, it will become necessary for the school to use aides, paraprofessionals, and automated systems to complete these tasks and, thereby, allow the media specialist the time to carry out the instruction-related consultative services.

Second, in this proposed role, it is important that the media specialist's primary goal be aiding teachers in solving instructional problems rather than assisting the principal to identify teacher weaknesses during the evaluation process. However, it should be recognized that efforts to separate the consultative and evaluative responsibilities completely, would be contrary to the accountability movement. To be in strict adherence with the tenets of this movement, those in helping positions, such as the media specialist, must either be ultimately responsible for the improvement of those being helped or be involved in the dismissal process. Therefore, when a media specialist helps a teacher to improve instructional effectiveness through one of the consultative responsibilities, the media specialist has a record of the efforts made to improve the teacher's skill. Because the media specialist will have this information, he or she may be required to offer that evidence in a dismissal procedure. Willingness to cooperate in these procedures will be a new albeit unwelcome role for most media specialists.

A third element which must be considered is the attitude of teachers toward the media specialist being involved in the classroom instructional program. Research

TEAM APPROACH continued on page 23

tifacts brought in from home. Our New England heritage was a help here.

Then a third grade class honored Steven Kellogg by writing and producing a play for him in which characters from all of his books took part.

Second graders excited over Roma Gans' science books and her love of birds decorated a special cake (baked by the classroom teacher) with little paper birds they had drawn, colored, and cut out.

First and second graders often work up an "operetta" by using familiar nursery and children's song tunes linking original words with lines and action much to the delight of various authors being honored. For Oliver Butterworth it was "The Enormous Egg." For P.D. Eastman "The Best Nest" was used, for Hardy Gramatky it was "Little Toot," and kindergarteners did "Chicken Soup" for Maurica Sendak.

Third graders honored Ann McGovern with an original play, and fourth graders worked out a skit on monsters much to the delight of Tom Aylesworth. Susan Purdy has mentioned the class that used her recipe books to develop a bake sale project that taught them practical use of math.

The 1986 fair theme is "Alice and the Wonderland of Books." At the time of writing, eighteen authors have accepted. A number of them are repeaters, some returning after a couple of years absence. For them, finding the fair moved to Farmingville Elementary School will be a change in location, but not in enthusiasm or fun.

Judy Hawes (and her husband) are going to be back. Last year, in line with their nature book interests, their escorts for the day dressed themselves up to look like lady

bugs. No one knows what surprise will be ready for them this year.

Carla Stevens, Sam Savitt, Ann McGovern, Dorcas MacClintock, Jean Van Leeuwen, and Catherine Barr are others. Fifth graders are working out a play for Jean Van Leeuwen. And the class that has invited Catherine Barr are writing stories for her which she will illustrate and leave the sketches for the class and their school.

Activities required to produce the Book Fair obviously require student written and oral use of language, art experiences, music, and social studies tie-ins. All of this curricular activity comes about naturally because the students see a purpose to it. Certainly, familiarity with books is increased, and the authors become true friends rather than mysterious unknowns. A number of the student performances, as well as author sessions, have been retained on videotape. □

[It should be noted that when Barlow Mountain Elementary School was closed, and the school library media teacher was transferred to Farmingville Elementary School, the Book Fair project was not lost. Mrs. Nye continues it in the new setting, and a number of parents have encouraged the development of a similar project in Ridgebury Elementary School, the other elementary school to which Barlow Mountain students were relocated.]

Peggy Nye is a School Library Media Teacher at Farmingville Elementary School in Ridgefield, Connecticut. She was 1985 recipient of the DSMS Teamwork Award for her work with a curriculum oriented book fair that has gone on for fifteen years and getting better every year.

TEAM APPROACH continued from page 21

shows that the most difficult aspect of having the media specialist function as an instructional improvement coordinator is in enlisting the cooperation of classroom teachers. Studies indicate that principals are more open to having media specialists assist teachers improve their instruction than are teachers. Therefore, if the media specialist is to be delegated consultative responsibilities, it is necessary for the principal to facilitate faculty acceptance of this role. It will be the media specialist's responsibility, once the principal has evidenced his or her support, to make the role valued by teachers. Where this has been done, teachers now view the media specialist as an invaluable ally and instructional resource.

Communication is the fourth element needed for successful implementation of this concept. It is important in most activities, but it is crucial to the success of a team approach to improving instruction. The media specialist must be given adequate time to report on his or her delegated responsibilities. There will be many times when the media specialist will need direction from the principal, but chance meetings in the lunchroom or hall are not sufficient. Effective communication, therefore, requires advance planning, scheduling, and discipline in allocating time for the principal/media specialist conferences.

When these four elements are present, it should be possible for the media specialist and the principal to have a working relationship that uses the strongest capabilities of each. If put into place, this proposal offers a solution to a problem facing many schools where the principals are inundated by so managerial demands that they lose sight

of their instructional leadership role. By effectively using the skills of the media specialist, the principal can, indeed, provide a well coordinated instructional improvement plan for the faculty.

References

- American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology. **Media Programs, District and School.** Chicago: American Library Association, 1975.
- Cawelti, G. and Reavis, C. How well are we providing instructional improvement services? **Educational Leadership**, 1980, 38(3), 236-38.
- Gallup, G. H. Taking education's pulse: The 13th annual Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools. **Principal**, 1981, 61(1), 21-36.
- Howell, B. Profile of the principalship. **Educational Leadership**, 1981, 38(4), 333-336.
- McIntyre, K. E. **Evaluating the performance of school principals in the administration and improvement of the instructional program.** (Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, 1972).
- Mohajerin, K. S. and Smith, E. P. Perceptions of the role of the school media specialist. **School Media Quarterly**, 1981, 9(3), 152-163.
- Salmon, D. A. Paranoia: Perceptions of public school principals. **Clearing House**, 1980, 54(4), 149-154.
- Worner, W. Survival kit for supervisors. **Educational Leadership**, 1982, 39(4), 258-259.
- Zechman, H. T. Are principals competent in the instructional leadership domain? **NASSP Bulletin**, 1977, 61(413), 21-25. □

Dr. Watkins is President of Gainesville Junior College and Dr. Smith is President of School Media Consultants.

SCHOOL LEARNING RESOURCES

Spring/Summer 1986

Vol. 5 No. 3



School Learning Resources is published by the AECT's Division of School Media Specialists, P.O. Box 6242, University, Alabama 35486. Advertising included does not constitute endorsement nor do opinions expressed by authors reflect an official position of the officers or membership of DSMS. Subscription price is included in DSMS membership. Single copies may be purchased for \$2.50, depending upon availability. Make checks payable to AECT.

Editor

Philip Turner

Associate Editor

Gordon Coleman

Consulting Editor

Anthony C. Schulzetenberg

Editorial Review Board

Gert Geck
Charles Hendrickson
Steve Zsiray
Deborah Anthony
Hilda Jay

Advertising Manager

Ed Counts

Business Manager

Duane Radeke

Production Manager

Lois Smith

Graphic Design/Typography

Dennis Voigt

media services 742



PRINTED BY:
DISTRICT 742 MEDIA SERVICES
ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA

features

- 4 Locating Microcomputer Software *Janet Noll Naumer*
- 6 A Look Into The Professional Life of the Media Specialist *Lowell E. Olson*
- 8 Developing Information Technology Middle School Programs That Reflect Student Needs *Stephen W. Zsiray Jr.*
- 16 COMMTEX '86: Convention Highlights
- 21 A Team Approach For Improved Instruction *J. Foster Watkins & Jane Bandy Smith*
- 22 Teamwork and Sharing *Peggy Nye*
- 24 A User Services Model of the Roles of School Library Media Programs *James Liesene*

departments

- 2 Editorial Pages 18 Of Professional Interest
- 12 Equipment News 28 What 3 Know is No Secret
- 14 For Young Adults 29 A Point of View

Association for Educational Communications and Technology Division of School Media Specialists

Executive Committee:

President Diane Biesel
President-Elect Janis Bruwelheide
Secretary Bev Carlson
Past President Larry Wiget
Regional Director Phyllis Joseph

Publications Committee:

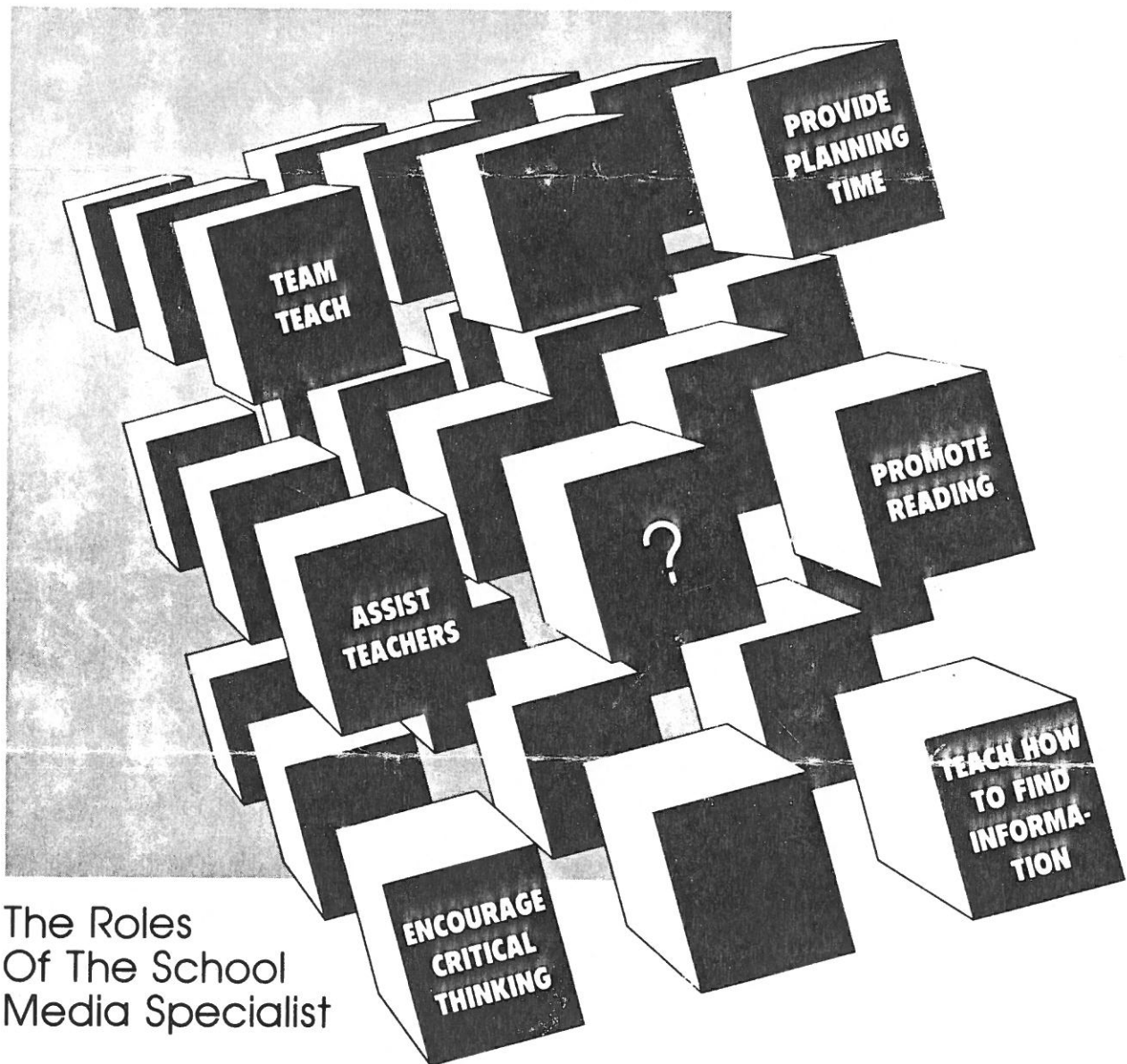
Phil Turner, *Chairperson*
Eleanor Terry
Mary Cramer
Glenda Thurman

Board of Directors:

Region I Carol Carlisle
Region II Sally Young
Region III Jane Love
Region IV Donna Baumbach
Region V Rollie Billings
Region VI Phyllis Joseph
Region VI Frank Birmingham
Region VII Robert Gray
Region VIII James Loya
Region IX Jay Monfort

SCHOOL LEARNING RESOURCES

The Journal of The Division of School Media Specialists of AECT



The Roles
Of The School
Media Specialist

Spring/Summer 1986

Vol. 5, No. 3