

Tracking the Transition to a Flexible Access Library Program in Two Library Power Elementary Schools

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Although education reform and restructuring efforts make flexible access library programs more important than ever, fixed schedule library programs remain the norm in elementary schools. This study describes how participants interpret the process of implementing flexible access library programs in elementary school settings and how these programs evolve over time. First-year experiences indicate that meeting the challenges of implementation requires stakeholders to attend to: 1.) communication and public relations, 2.) support provided for school library media specialists and classroom teachers, 3.) provision of adequate resources, 4.) professional development opportunities, and 5.) school climate. Theory and research from the literature of education change provide a framework for considering the implementation of a flexible access library program as an educational innovation.

Information Power, the national professional guidelines for school library media programs, outlines three roles for school library media specialists: information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant.(1) Because of scheduling arrangements common in most elementary schools, many school library media specialists are unable to assume all three roles. Instead of operating on a flexible schedule like their secondary school counterparts, many elementary school library media specialists find themselves assigned to meet with each class in the school during the same period of time each week. While this arrangement may offer some advantages (e.g., accountability for the library media specialist's time, and assurance that each child visits the library media center once a week), students' visits to the library media center are frequently unrelated to class activities, and library media specialists are unable to plan with teachers for the integration of information literacy skills into the curriculum.(2)

The process of implementing flexible access library programs and the evolution of these programs over time is the focus of this study, which reports preliminary findings from a long-term study in two elementary schools. Previous research studies related to scheduling issues in school library media centers have concentrated on comparing the roles played by library media specialists in fixed, flexible, or mixed programs, or on contrasting aspects of fixed and flexible programs.(3) Library and education literature indicate that it takes three years to implement a flexible access program, but systematic research that examines how a flexible access program evolves has not been conducted. Findings from this research provide guidance to elementary schools making the transition to flexible access library programs.

Much of the current interest in flexible access library schedules is related to education reform efforts and the development of the instructional consultant role of the library media specialist; calls for such programs, however, are far from new. Although the terminology in use today, “flexible schedule” or “flexible access,” dates from the mid-1950s, Fedora speculates that the “discussion of fixed versus flexible scheduling may have begun around the time of the progressive school movement” and that the concept of flexible scheduling “developed in connection with nontraditional, experimental education methods.”(4) Since the publication of the 1960 *Standards for School Library Program*, a specific recommendation for flexibly scheduled elementary school library media programs has been part of each subsequent set of standards or guidelines issued by the American Association of School Librarians, including *Information Power*.(5) Still, fixed schedule library programs remain the norm in elementary schools. In 1993, the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and the American Association of School Librarians surveyed a sample of school library media specialists in public schools from twelve states. The study revealed that only 13 percent of the 323 elementary schools in the twelve-state sample had fully flexible library programs, 19 percent had partially flexible schedules, and 68 percent operated on a fixed schedule.(6)

In writing about education reform, Schlechty asserts that “anything that stands in the way of flexible allocation of resources must be considered a candidate for restructuring.”(7) The philosophy behind flexible access library programs is consistent with current education reform initiatives. For example, resource-based learning, interdisciplinary thematic studies, literature-based reading programs, and student projects and performances are fundamental to the curricular initiatives called for by the State of Kentucky’s education reform package. The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), passed by the Kentucky legislature and signed into law in 1990, is one of the most far-reaching school restructuring efforts in the country. Teachers are expected to involve students in authentic, “real life” learning activities, to emphasize problem-solving and critical thinking, and to provide students with a variety of instructional materials.(8) Adequate library resources and the expertise of a well-prepared school library media specialist are basic to the success of these kinds of school programs and to the integration of technology across the curriculum. Wolcott points out that the rapidly evolving state of information and education technology and the current focus on school restructuring “add a new urgency to the role of the school library media specialist.”(9) Without flexible access library programs in place, it will be impossible for elementary schools to realize the potential of a fully integrated library media program.

Even though a flexibly scheduled elementary school library program is not a new concept for most library media specialists, it should not be assumed that the majority of elementary school classroom teachers are familiar with this approach. Accepting Fullan’s broad definition of innovation as “any practice new to the person attempting to cope with an educational problem,” then the move from a fixed library schedule to a flexible access program can be defined as an educational innovation.(10)

Methodology

Research Questions

The primary purpose in conducting this study was to describe and understand how stakeholders in elementary schools interpret the experience of shifting from fixed library schedules to flexible access in order to identify both effective practices and challenges related to implementing such programs. Research and theory related to the nature of education change were used as a framework to support thinking about this particular innovation. Preliminary findings from two Library Power schools in Kentucky are reported.

Based on these purposes, these research questions were formulated:

- What perceptions and expectations of a flexible access library program do the various stakeholders have?
- How do these perceptions and expectations evolve over time?

With implementation of a flexible access library program:

- how do teachers, students, and other school community members use the library media center differently?
- what new interactions between teachers and the school library media specialist evolve?
- how does the role of the library media specialist change?
- what challenges are encountered with the implementation of a flexible access library program?

A naturalistic case study methodology has been employed in this ongoing investigation. Basic to a qualitative approach to research are attention to participants' perspectives on reality, various data collection techniques, and an inductive process. That is, purpose, focus, and boundaries are determined in advance, but the actual research design remains flexible in order to accommodate and take advantage of knowledge gained and opportunities suggested during field work. The intent of this study is not to generalize, but to provide information and insights related to the implementation of a flexible access library program that will encourage elementary schools to adopt successful strategies as they experience the change process.

During the phase of the study reported in this article, data were collected over a three-month period through (1) interviews with teachers, library media specialists, and administrators, (2) field notes from observations and meetings attended at one of the schools, and (3) documents collected at both sites. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Data collection and data analysis were overlapping and integrated. Field notes and interview transcripts were reviewed several times and coded for topics and issues. As patterns emerged, categories were developed that evolved into the themes discussed in this preliminary report.

The two elementary schools that serve as research sites are located in a relatively rural school district in central Kentucky.⁽¹¹⁾ Both schools serve approximately six hundred students in kindergarten through grade five with approximately forty certified staff members in each school. The staff in each school is putting into practice initiatives that are part of KERA, the state's comprehensive statewide education reform plan. These two elementary schools are part of a larger group of schools making up one of nineteen National Library Power Program sites. The purposes of Library Power (funded by the DeWitt-Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund and

administered by the American Association of School Librarians) is to change teaching and learning in an information society by making the school library media center the heart of the education process. In order to qualify for this funding, individual school sites must agree to implement flexible access library programs (along with other nonnegotiable stipulations) during the three-year period of the grant. Prior to the 1994-95 school year, both schools had fixed schedule library media programs. In the spring of the 1993-94 school year, both schools began the initiation phase of adopting a flexible access library media program; each school, however, approached this process differently. (Because flexible access library programs are basic to the Library Power initiative, points related to this program are included throughout this report.)(12)

Setting and Participants

Site one. Windermere, the district's newest elementary school, was in its third year of operation during this phase of the study. Most of the teaching staff voluntarily joined the faculty from other elementary schools in the district. A few were either new to the district or were first-year teachers. Kate, the library media specialist, had been at the school all three years. During the two previous school years, all classes were assigned thirty minutes of time in the library media center each week. Time in the library media center was scheduled immediately before or after another "special" class, a scheme that established a one-hour planning time for classroom teachers. Classes were scheduled into the library media center so that there were also blocks of time available for flexible access on most days. The staff at Windermere moved to a fully flexible library program at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year. In April, Kate reflected on her work with teachers:

I'd say I have six or seven teachers with whom I feel really good about the collaborative effort. They come in a week or more in advance and we make appointment times to talk. We fill out the paperwork necessary for me to understand and for them to understand the roles each of us will play in project planning, assessment, and the whole thing.

She explained that she has another six or seven teachers who stop by for ten minutes or so to talk about upcoming projects and another six or seven who have arranged for her to conduct story times or who have sent students individually or in small groups for research (but who do not schedule time for joint planning sessions).

Site two. Although most members of Fairview Elementary School's faculty are experienced teachers (most have ten or more years of classroom experience), there are a few who are relatively new both to Fairview and to teaching. Janet has served as library media specialist since the school opened in the late 1970s. When she and the principal were approached about the possibility of joining the Library Power Program, they weighed the advantages and disadvantages of participating. For them, the biggest stumbling block was the prospect of implementing a flexible library schedule. According to Janet, she and the principal had discussed a flexible library program shortly after passage of KERA. She referred to a document from the Kentucky State Department of Education entitled *Online with KERA*, (13) which, in Janet's words, "suggested [a] plan for changing libraries." Janet and the principal decided "that with all of the changes coming down the road for teachers during the first year of KERA, it was not a good time to change the library schedule."

For the past four years the fixed library schedule (as well as the schedules of other “specialists”) at Fairview has been designed to provide planning time for teachers at the same grade level. Scheduled times in the library media center were scattered throughout the week with no blocks of time for prolonged flexible access. As an initial effort in moving to a flexible access program, Janet continued with once-a-week, thirty-minute scheduled times for every class during the 1994-95 school year and scheduled classes back-to-back on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings and on Thursday and Friday afternoons. This made flexible time available three afternoons and two mornings each week. As Janet described it, “I have just about all of the fourth and fifth grade teachers, the gifted-enrichment teacher, and about half of the [grade] two [and] three primary teachers doing projects.”

Challenges and Concerns

By far, the most serious challenge is related to teacher planning time. The library media specialists in these two schools have traditionally provided a thirty-minute planning time for teachers. Teachers believed that they had “lost” planning time by moving to a flexible access library program. Teachers in Kentucky are especially pressed for time as they implement the required components of the state’s education reform package. Primary teachers are teaching in new ways and are adjusting to teaching multi-aged groups of children. Fourth-grade students must submit writing portfolios that fourth-grade teachers are responsible for evaluating at the end of the school year. Mathematics portfolios are completed and scored at the end of the fifth grade. “Tight time schedules” was mentioned by teachers at both schools. Finding time to collaborate with the library media specialist may also be problematic for some teachers. One teacher commented, “I think that once teachers have collaborated with the library media specialist, they will see the benefit.” She suggested providing special incentives (such as extra planning time) “at least at first . . . until people see the benefit of doubling your resources . . . of having two people instead of one responsible for a project.”

Both library media specialists experimented with various printed forms to facilitate collaborative planning, and both were sensitive to the possibility that such forms could be perceived by teachers as “just more paperwork.” To guard against that possibility, Kate completed the form as she talked with the teachers about upcoming projects: “The collaboration form that I have is pretty thorough and I make it less intimidating by just using a legal pad. I have five or six things in my mind that I know I want to cover, so I just bring these up verbally . . . objectives, skills, time frame, and resources.” In looking toward next year’s fully flexible schedule, Janet submitted a number of different forms to teachers and asked them to indicate which one they feel would work best.

Teachers expressed concerns relating to circulation of materials and overdue library materials. With a flexible access program, teachers feel responsible for guaranteeing regular book exchange for every student. Some teachers remain more comfortable with a set day and time for this activity. Others welcomed the fact that students can exchange books at any time and as many times during the week as they like. One teacher commented that she thinks the difference in teacher reactions is related to differences in how they structure their classrooms. For those teachers who do more whole group activities or are uncomfortable sending children from the

classroom unsupervised, individual student exchange of library books may not be perceived as a workable arrangement.

Even though their students had a fixed library time during the 1994-95 school year, some of the Fairview teachers identified this as a potential problem when they move to a fully flexible program. Some teachers worried that children might not acquire “library skills” without the scheduled weekly lessons by the library media specialist. Others were concerned that their students would miss the story times that are usually part of a fixed schedule library program. This was especially true of the combination kindergarten/first grade teachers. Thus far, both library media specialists feel better about their progress with second- through fifth-grade teachers and students than they do with their school’s youngest children. Kate and Janet have tried to reassure teachers that literature enrichment and lessons in information literacy skills remain at the heart of their library programs, and that a flexible schedule enhances their opportunities to integrate such activities into the curriculum in ways that result in more effective instruction.

A challenge resulting from a more basic or underlying circumstance was identified by a teacher at Windermere. From her perspective, some teachers are “out of their comfort zone” considering all the changes that have been made as part of the implementation of KERA. Rather than taking the view that a flexible library program and partnership with the library media specialist can help facilitate their implementation of many of KERA’s expectations, some teachers see it as just one more change they are expected to make. Finding ways to help those individuals make the connection between education reform initiatives and flexible access library programs is a formidable challenge.

Meeting the Challenges

Educational change is a dynamic process. Fullan contends that key factors or themes form a “system of variables” that interact over time “to determine success or failure.”(14) Communication, support, professional development, adequate resources, and school climate are interrelated and overlapping themes that seem to characterize effective practices in meeting the challenges of implementing flexible access library programs in these schools. Each of these is discussed separately, but it is important to keep in mind that each is part of the other.

Communication and Public Relations

Effective communication and public relations practices on the part of the library media specialist are basic to the success of a flexible access library program. At Fairview and Windermere, communication is facilitated by an “advisory committee” and a “training team,” both requirements of the National Library Power Program. According to Kate, her advisory board (which includes community members, teachers, and administrators) assists in setting overall goals for the library media program, while the training team (made up of teachers) helps by modeling effective use of library resources and collaboration with the library media specialist. This ensures a core of teachers functioning as advocates of the library media program.

Participation in the Library Power Program has focused schoolwide attention on library media programs. Activities, professional development opportunities, and publicity coordinated by the

local education fund administering the grant have illuminated the potential of library media programs and how they can support teachers. Library media specialists at Fairview and Windermere strive to highlight the potential contribution of the library media program through written and oral communication with faculty, including newsletters, memos, and flyers.

Kate conducted a six-week orientation program for students in grades two through five at the beginning of the school year. She spent thirty minutes a week with each class to introduce children to all available resources and to encourage them to be independent users of the library media center. Kate explained that the children “came in with their teacher, which was wonderful because always before when I trained the kids to use the resources, the teacher wasn’t there. This time, in all of the things that I introduced I was keying in on the teachers as much as the students.” Kate also distributed a “List of Ways to Use Your Media Center” at the start of the school year. Near the end of the school year, Kate and her “training team” organized what they referred to as a “Library Power Roundtable,” a one-hour meeting held after school for purposes of “sharing successes, discussing ways to improve, and brainstorming for next year.”

Even though she expressed disappointment that there was not sufficient time to discuss collaboration specifically, Kate was optimistic about the meeting. Teachers were positive about the flexibility of the library media program, but expressed concerns related to (1) an increase in overdue materials, (2) the need for additional adults to assist children engaged in individual or small-group research, and (3) a lack of regular story times for the primary grades.

Janet attended grade-level meetings organized by the curriculum resource teacher for primary teachers and intermediate teachers at her school. She used these sessions to distribute information on flexible library programs, teacher/librarian collaboration, and anything else teachers might find helpful as they look toward next year’s fully flexible schedule. She also exchanged ideas with individual teachers about expanded possibilities for collaboration and use of the library media center when they move to a fully flexible program. She has made a special point of “targeting” teachers she identified as vocal and having influence on others.

After describing some of the ways in which she and Kate had worked together during the school year, one of the teachers at Windermere explained that, in order for flexible scheduling to succeed, the library media specialist needed “to sell the program.” When the principal at Kate’s school was asked about what it takes to succeed with a flexible access library program, he, too, stressed the importance of the library media specialist taking a “proactive” stance: “The librarian has to be aggressive, proactive, and a people person. [She] needs to reach out to teachers, ask about what they are doing, and offer suggestions about ways [she] can help.”

Support

School- and district-level support have been crucial factors for both Kate and Janet. Because flexible access is required as part of their participation in the National Library Power Program, they have more support in their move away from fixed library schedules than they might otherwise have had. Janet admitted being very nervous about introducing the possibility of participation in the Library Power Program to her faculty because of the flexible access requirement. For her, district-level support was vital.

Michele, the district's instructional supervisor, made the initial presentation about Library Power and flexible scheduling to the faculty at Fairview. According to Janet, "We just felt like it would be more appropriate for Michele to come in and discuss this with the staff. She did an absolutely marvelous job. She has a way of presenting that is very convincing." Kate also described Michele's way of supporting library programs in the district: "She realizes that each school is different and has unique strengths. She works at the school level with the librarian and the principal. She looks at the librarian, the school's personality, the principal's ideas and where they are, and then moves forward." Recognizing the importance of a sufficient level of clerical assistance necessary to mount an effective flexible access program, Michele wrote a successful grant proposal to fund full-time clerical assistants for the district's library media programs.

Kate also discussed the role of her principal: "I think the principal's support is key. You really need that initial support, and I had that." Recognizing that teachers' loss of thirty minutes of planning time each week in order to implement a flexible access library program would be the most serious stumbling block, he devised ways "to kind of ease that morale-wise." He extended the lunch period by five minutes each day and developed what he refers to as "community forum," a meeting held with students at each grade level every other Friday afternoon at which time he discusses schoolwide issues or arranges for a presentation by another person. During that thirty-minute period, teachers are free to plan. He hopes that this will encourage increased collaboration between classroom teachers and the library media specialist. Fairview will have a new principal next year, and Janet recognized the important role that person will play in setting the tone for the faculty's attitude toward the implementation of a fully flexible program.

In addition to support from the district level and from school-level administrators, library media specialists in the district turn to each other and to individual school advisory committees and training teams for encouragement, support, and ideas for implementing various parts of the Library Power Program, including flexible access. Michele arranged periodic meetings for the library media specialists to share and discuss ideas. They also assisted one another in explaining the goals of flexible access and collaboration by making joint presentations at faculty meetings organized expressly for that purpose at the district's elementary and middle schools.

Adequate Resources

In order to run an effective flexible access program, students and teachers must perceive the library media center to be rich in materials and resources. If they do not find what they need, chances are they will not return. Neither effective communication, nor support of administrators, nor outstanding professional development opportunities will be sufficient without offering users breadth and depth in terms of resources. This does not mean that all materials must be housed permanently in the library media center or in the school. One of the teachers at Fairview described how Janet located materials from other libraries and other agencies for one of the projects they worked on together. Janet explained how the blocks of flexible time facilitated the most efficient use of resources in her school. Invariably, students in all grade levels are working on science fair projects at the same time. In previous years, a few teachers checked out most of the books to use in their classrooms. This seriously curtailed access to these materials for the great majority of students. This year Janet placed all science project materials on reserve so that

the entire school had access to them at the same time, and children came to the library media center during flexible access times to use the materials.

A teacher at Windermere, one who described herself as “a real research buff,” sends her students to the library media center to complete “research-style projects” as well as to look up answers to questions that “pop up” in her classroom. When asked what recommendations she would make to a library media specialist who wants to move to a flexible access program, she emphasized the importance of a collection of adequate resources: “My personal feeling is that if you want to move into this kind of program, you should spend a couple of years looking at resources and your collection.”

Professional Development

Teachers and library media specialists in these schools have had a wide range of opportunities for continuing education experiences related to creating and utilizing effective school library media programs. At the end of the 1993-94 school year, the district sponsored a week-long workshop for elementary library media specialists and teachers from each school. Participants were introduced to methods of engaging elementary school students in independent research projects dependent on the wide variety of resources available in the library media center. During the 1994-95 school year, the organization coordinating the National Library Power Program in Kentucky arranged several training sessions for both teachers and library media specialists on topics such as collaboration, flexible scheduling, research, reading incentives, thematic units, and technology.

Several teachers from Windermere and Fairview attended these professional development activities. Janet and Kate found that teachers who attended workshops were the ones who collaborated with them most frequently. Also, those same teachers did indeed return to their schools with ideas and testimonials to share with their colleagues. For example, Janet and Kate both mentioned that teachers from their schools who heard a presentation on flexible access library programs at one of the workshops soon “spread the word” to other teachers about flexible scheduling and how it can work.

It is not unusual for the topic of flexible access library programs to appear on agendas at conferences and in-service sessions for school library media specialists. What is unusual is for the topic to be considered in forums that bring together classroom teachers, administrators, and school library media specialists. One benefit these two schools have realized as participants in the Library Power Program is the opportunity to be involved in continuing education for both classroom teachers and library media specialists at the same professional development events.

School Climate

A school climate that encourages cooperation and collaboration and supports risk-taking is critically important in facilitating much of the success Kate experienced during her first year with a fully flexible program. Much of the enthusiasm and camaraderie from the shared experience of starting a new school still exists among a significant number of Windermere staff and parents. Although she experiences periods of uncertainty and realizes that she faces

challenges in communicating her vision, Kate has an energetic and devoted group of teachers who are helping her spread the message. She and the curriculum resource teacher have been working on a “research model” to encourage teachers toward a more project-driven curriculum. The flexible access library program complemented that effort for those teachers already employing resource-based learning activities and engaging children in a process approach to writing.

Both Fairview and Windermere have teachers who prefer to develop their instructional plans individually and both have teachers who plan in pairs or teams. Janet and Kate have observed that those teachers who are comfortable planning in pairs or teams are the ones with whom they are collaborating most. Kate has employed a variety of techniques in her attempt to “recruit” those teachers who may not be making optimum use of the library media center. In reconsidering the preferred teaching style of some kindergarten/first-grade teachers, Kate decided to schedule regular story times for these classes during the next school year. She indicated that teachers are bringing children into the library media center to check out books, but that she is “hardly getting to know them.” Given the current situation, she believes that weekly sessions are the best way to establish a close relationship with students as they start school. She can then build on those relationships as she works with them during their six years at Windermere.

Collaboration is the driving force behind flexible access library programs. For teachers who are accustomed to working in relative isolation, collaboration may be a new practice. Essential to implementation of a flexible access library program is a climate in which collaboration can flourish and risk-taking is valued.

New Roles

Participants in this study were asked to comment on what changes they saw in the library media program and the role of the library media specialist with the implementation of flexible access. At this point in her transition to a flexible access program, Janet is concentrating on the move from information skills taught in isolation to skills integrated into the curriculum. Teachers commented that it was much easier to involve children in research projects now that there were flexible blocks of time available and that the teachers looked forward to more projects next year. Kate feels she has more “ownership” and more responsibility to see that children use the library media center. She sees her role as that of a “facilitator . . . as working with the teachers as a team member to afford kids lots of opportunities for expanded learning. I’m a team teacher instead of just an isolated teacher who is teaching things that I hope will branch out, but I’m not sure they will.” As one of the teachers at Windermere expressed it: “Flexible scheduling means a changed role for the library media specialist. She becomes involved on another level.”

Flexible Access School Library Programs and Education Reform

According to Fullan,(15) the three stages in educational change process are: (1) initiation, (2) implementation, and (3) continuation. Initiation includes the process leading up to and the decision to make the change. Implementation is the period during which the change, innovation,

or reform is put into practice. Continuation refers to the institutionalization or acceptance of the change as a sustained part of practice. In the cases of Windermere and Fairview, the period leading up to the decision to make this change was a relatively short one lasting approximately six weeks. It was during this period that administrators, teachers, and site-based council members at each school made their decision to participate in preparing a proposal for a Library Power implementation grant. After receiving news that the grant proposal was successful, both schools began implementing their flexible access programs in the fall of 1994.

During the first year, much has been learned from the experiences of the staffs in these two schools in terms of the initiation and implementation of this particular educational innovationCa flexible access library program. The immediate incentive for the shift from a fixed schedule library program to a flexible access program at Windermere and Fairview was the National Library Power Program. Staff members at both schools acknowledged that they may have considered the possibility of a restructured library program sometime in the future, but it would not have happened as quickly without the Library Power Program providing the impetus. Recent research on education reform indicates that “top-down” reforms should not be rejected because it comes from the top down. It is unlikely that all stakeholders understand and share the vision of those initiating the change whether it comes from the bottom or the top. In fact, researchers have found that until people are actually involved in a new practice, most do not realize ownership of the reform or fully understand the meaning of the change. Change in belief follows change in behavior.(16) But, as Schlechty points out, “the way purposes are articulated and the way vision is expressed must take into account the needs and values of those who are expected to act on these expressions.”(17)

For a flexible access library program to become institutionalized at these schools, teachers, administrators, and library media specialists must perceive it as satisfying their needs and values. This particular change complements the much larger education reform agenda being pursued in Kentucky and many other places in the United States, and will require what Fullan believes is true for any multidimensional change in educational practice: “use of new materials, teaching approaches, and alternation of beliefs.”(18)

Near the end of the 1994-95 school year, Windermere’s principal confided that “we made the change and then our philosophy grew out of seeing how that can work. I see the advantage [of flexible scheduling] and I understand it much more clearly. It has been a learning process for me.” One of the teachers at Windermere explained that when she first heard the school was considering a flexible library schedule she was afraid that the library would not be used “if we didn’t have scheduled times” and that “we would not find the time for the things we need to do in the library media center.” She described herself as having been “won over” to the idea of a flexible access program and that she “would not want to go back the other way.”

Research indicates that successful implementation of education innovation is most likely when relevance, readiness, and resources are present from the start.(19) The relevance factor includes practitioners’ understanding of the need for and the importance of the proposed change. Readiness refers to both individual and organizational considerations. Ideally, individuals understand the need for the change, consider it reasonable, and possess the knowledge and skills to implement the change. Organizationally, school culture should be compatible with proposed

changes. In order to move forward with such a change, a certain level of support and resources are necessary. Kate and Janet, with the support of their advisory boards, training teams, school- and district-level administrators, and the local education fund administering the Library Power Program grant, are attending to relevance, readiness, and resources as they go forward with their implementation efforts.

The experience of the staffs at Windermere and Fairview indicates that initiation and implementation are not discrete phases of the education change process. Rather, they overlap and are recursive. Even if flexible access library programs in these schools evolve to the continuation stage, stakeholders will return to practices associated with initiation and implementation. Change is a complex social process and is as much a learning experience for the adults in the school as it is for the children. This change is only one part of the much larger education reform effort being implemented in these schools. Institutionalization of this innovation will depend on whether flexible access library programs become embedded into teachers' practice and into the schools' structure and organization.(20) As the teachers, library media specialists, and administrators move into the second year of implementation, it will be important for them to keep in mind Schlechty's advice about the process of rallying support for change:

Change requires commitment of energy and resources. It requires people to take risks and break habits. It causes discomfort and uncertainty. It creates needs as well as satisfies them. When undergoing change, people need more support and security than when their world is stable; these needs must be satisfied for substantial change to go forward.(21)

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