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Inclusive Library Education for Students with Extensive Support Needs

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Inclusive Library Education for Students with Extensive Support Needs

by

Kara J. Ronning

A Starred Paper

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

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Thesis Committee:
Jennifer Hill, Chairperson
Scott Baker
Brian Valentini

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Library media specialists in K-12 schools serve students with a broad range of abilities. The American Association of School Libraries (AASL) asserts in its framework for learners that intellectual freedom and the school library is a right for every learner (American Library Association, 2018a). For various reasons, sometimes special education students with extensive support needs cannot exercise that right (Kurth et al., 2019; Perrault, 2011; Taub et al., 2017). The American Library Association (ALA) also acknowledges this in their *Services to People with Disabilities* statement stating although there are varying disabilities, the “group shares a common experience of discrimination and encountering barriers to access” (2018b, p.1). Despite these barriers, “these students need the library...they need the librarian’s skills, passion, and resources” (Horan, 2018, p. 31). The library media specialist can help provide students with extensive support needs opportunities to learn.

Chapter one provides an overview of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandate regarding least restrictive environment (LRE) and the library media specialist’s role to promote an inclusive space for all learners. It addresses some of the issues relating to why library media specialists may not work with students with extensive support needs, which brings up questions of how library media specialists can work with this population of students. The chapter will also identify terminology used throughout the study.

Context and Background

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2022), 14% of students in public schools received special education services under IDEA during the 2020-2021 school year, and of those seven million students, approximately 25% had autism or intellectual disability. IDEA mandates all students receiving special education services should be educated in

the least restrictive environment as much as possible, but how individual education plan (IEP) teams decide on what is the LRE for the individual student varies (Kurth et al., 2019). In addition to the least restrictive environment, IEP teams also must determine what supplementary aids and services are needed for individuals with special needs to be successful in the LRE (Kurth et al., 2018).

The library media center in the K-12 school is committed to inclusion and equity (American Library Association, 2018b). This means all students are welcome to use the library media center facilities, and the library media specialist works to support the learning of all students. The role of the library media specialist in a K-12 school often mirrors that of the special education teacher. Both library media specialist and special education teacher collaborate with colleagues on behalf of students and work with students of varying abilities (Perrault, 2011). The library media center and library media specialist can also foster student wellbeing as they “support inclusivity, empathy and activities catered to diversity” in a safe space (Merga, 2020 p. 662).

Problem Statement

While library media specialists are in a position to work with students with special needs and collaborate with special education and general education teachers on students’ behalf, the question arises for how library media specialists are working with special education students with extensive support needs. Jones et al. (2010) claims, the library media specialist is often “a forgotten partner” for special education and general education teachers seeking collaboration for their special needs students (p.14). Some barriers library media specialists report include a lack of knowledge of the students’ disabilities, lack of resources to work with these students (Murray, 2002; Perrault, 2011), and minimal training for specific disabilities (Layden et al., 2021). Despite

these types of barriers, library media specialists continue to work to collaborate with special education teachers and establish programming to accommodate students with extensive support needs. The purpose of this study is to examine how libraries of K-12 schools are working with students with extensive support needs to provide opportunities to learn through both direct instruction and collaboration with special education and general education teachers.

Rationale

Students with disabilities, particularly those with disabilities who require extensive support needs, are sometimes an underestimated population (MacLeod, 2017; Taub et al., 2017) and not empowered with learning opportunities equivalent to their peers (Taub et al., 2017). For example, an assumption could be made that a student with extensive support needs may not be interested in the programming available or that there is no appropriate leveled reading material for the student's needs in the library. The library is a central part of the school where all students, including those with special needs, should have learning opportunities, and the library media specialist is uniquely situated to work with students of varying abilities (Jones et al., 2010). The library media center can provide opportunities for active learning and collaboration for students with extensive support needs where they can experience guided socialization and communication (Layden et al., 2021). For their typically developing peers, having students with extensive support needs allows opportunities for diverse interactions, which can help build empathy. Research on how library media specialists are working with students with extensive support needs provides an opportunity to share successes, challenges, and ideas.

Research Questions

- How are K-12 school libraries currently working with students with extensive support needs?

- If given the opportunity, what ideas do K-12 school library staff have for working with students with extensive support needs?

Significance

As part of the school community, special education students with extensive support needs such as intellectual disability and developmental delays should have learning opportunities similar to their peers. Library media specialists have varying levels of experience and training with supporting students with disabilities (Layden et al., 2021). Through gathering data from existing literature and directly from library media specialists in schools, information can be gleaned about how the library media specialist accommodates this population of students. Additionally, the information can further be used to determine what programming should be offered to provide students with extensive support needs learning opportunities. As Murray (2002) stated, “As inclusive schooling becomes more established, information skills teaching strategies will need more development and opportunity for co-teaching created” (p. 319). Garnering more information can help to create opportunities for collaboration between library media specialists and other teachers, both special and general education teachers, to better serve students with extensive support needs. When more collaboration and sharing of ideas is able to happen, this population of students can be included more widely in the programs and services the library media center provides.

Definition of Terms

American Association of School Libraries (AASL): A professional organization which created the framework for learners-standards and guidelines for school librarians (American Library Association, 2018a).

American Library Association (ALA): The international parent organization of AASL that encompasses all types of libraries (American Library Association, 2018b).

Students with extensive support needs: Special education students with such disabilities as autism, developmental delays, or intellectual disability who require a significant amount of support and may qualify for their state's alternate achievement assessment (Kurth et al., 2019).

Inclusive education: Although the term inclusive can be applied to all forms of diversity, such as gender, race, sexuality, for example, this study will focus on inclusion as the practice of including special needs students with their typically developing peers by using coteaching and close collaboration between the general education teacher and special education teacher (McMohan et al., 2016).

Inclusive library: A library media center environment that is both welcoming and accessible in all areas of diversity (Robertson et al., 2022). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will be focusing on the inclusivity of library for special education students with extensive support needs.

Individual educational plan (IEP): A legal document which sets measurable goals for the student and outlines the services the school will provide to meet a student's specific educational needs (Kurth et al., 2019; Taub et al., 2017).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A federal law securing the right of all children with disabilities to a free, appropriate education (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Least restrictive environment (LRE): A portion of IDEA that states that as much as possible, students with disabilities should be educated with their typically developing peers (Kurth et al., 2019; Taub et al., 2017).

Summary

The needs of students with disabilities, especially those with extensive support needs, can be daunting. IEP teams within schools must make choices about where the LRE is for these students and ensure opportunities to learn (Kurth et al., 2019; Taub et al., 2017). The library media center is a place where students with extensive support needs can have opportunities to learn in a general education setting. The library media specialist's position has many similarities to the special education teacher, and as such, is situated well to work with students with special needs and collaborate with their special education and general education teachers.

The following chapters in this paper further examine the relationship of the library media specialist to students with special needs. Chapter two focuses on literature relating to inclusion of special needs in library programming. Chapter three presents the methodology of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The AASL Common Beliefs of the Framework for Learners states that effective school librarians are “committed to inclusion and equity” and “use evidence to determine what works, for whom and under what conditions for each learner” (American Library Association, 2018a, p.3). This chapter critically reviews existing literature regarding how library media specialists support students with extensive support needs. The purpose of this study is to investigate how library media specialists can collaborate with special education teachers, general education teachers and students with special needs to provide learning opportunities and enhance learning experiences.

Methodology

For the literature review, the researcher gathered peer reviewed journal articles from both the information media and special education disciplines. Due to limited research on students with extensive support needs in the library media center, the researcher included articles ranging back to 2000. These articles focused upon information media for public libraries, K-12 school libraries, and special education.

Some keywords searched for included: school libraries, special needs, accommodations, inclusion, accessibility, and students with disabilities. The materials used for the literature review were gathered from online database searches, such as the St. Cloud State University online catalog, Academic Search Premier, eLibrary MN research databases, and eric.ed.gov; some additional sources are included from credible organizations, such as the Department of Education and the American Association for School Librarians as needed. The following section examines information from the existing literature.

Literature Review

Least Restrictive Environment Decisions

While IDEA mandates all students receiving special education services must prioritize educating students in the LRE (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), it is the responsibility of IEP teams to decide what the LRE for each individual student is (Kurth et al., 2019). These decisions consider all aspects of the best placement for the student. The IEP team of a school considers personnel, services, and support needs for these students to determine if a student can remain in the general education setting (Giangreco, 2011; Kurth et al., 2018). Decisions about LRE are not just based on academic inclusion, but also consider organizational and social inclusion as well (Agran et al., 2017; McMahon et al., 2016). The library media center is a place where students with extensive support needs can benefit from inclusive education providing academic supports as well as functional and social skills supports.

Academic Supports

A licensed media specialist in a school correlates with higher test scores for all populations of students including students in special education (Lance & Kachel, 2018). In its standards framework for learners, the AASL asserts that intellectual freedom and the school library is a right for every learner (American Library Association, 2018a). Murray (2002) states, “School librarians need to be aware of the students in their school who have disabilities, so that they can provide appropriate resources for them” (p. 319). Through collaboration with special education and regular education teachers, the LMS can support educational opportunities for all students including those with extensive support needs. Understanding how school libraries can support students with extensive support needs is crucial to ensuring this oftentimes

underestimated student population (MacLeod, 2017; Taub, D. et al., 2017) is included as learners within the school community.

As an academic resource, Allen and Hughes-Hassell (2010) assert, “school libraries have a responsibility to ensure that students with disabilities are educated appropriately” (p. 54). A library media specialist can help provide academic support directly to students in the library itself. For instance, Whitver (2020) promotes library media specialists use universal design as a conceptual framework to create a learning environment accessible to all. Indirectly, the library media specialist can support opportunities to learn for students with extensive support needs through collaboration with special education and regular education teachers, such as helping teachers access differentiated materials necessary for accommodating students with special needs (Allen & Hughes-Hassell, 2010; Hill, 2012).

Functional and Social Skills Supports

An additional important aspect of inclusive education is support of functional and social skills for students with extensive support needs. In the school setting, the library media specialist holds a unique position to include students with special needs into the broader school community. Rivera et al. (2014) addresses the need for inclusive practices of people at different levels of the school to focus on different aspects of a student’s educational experience. Incorporating programming in the library for this group of special education students allows the students to participate in the broader school community (Horan, 2018). Being able to participate in the broader school community, gives students with extensive support needs connections to their peers and opportunities to learn positive social behaviors. The library media center is part of the “variety of contexts and experiences for students to learn and develop positive relationships with other students” (Agran, et al., 2017, p. 3). For example, a student may learn collaborative

skills with peers using a makerspace or digital citizenship through lessons with the library media specialist. Greenburg (2019) discusses the importance of making the library media center a place where students feel comfortable.

Benefits of Inclusive Library Education

Collaboration between teachers of students with special needs and the LMS can benefit both the students and teachers (Horan, 2018; Murray, 2002; Perrault, 2011). Horan (2018) relays how special education students at his school felt part of the broader school community and the special education teacher appreciated the collaboration. Perrault (2011) states library media specialists and special education teachers alike reported “a sense that their work with students was strengthened through collaboration with colleagues in the school” (p.7). School staff benefits from the establishment of collaborative practices and opportunities for professional development (Murray, 2002). “When teachers concentrate on those whose access has been traditionally excluded, they create learning opportunities for everyone” (Whitver, 2020, p. 388). Inclusive schools that utilize collaborative teaching had more students with special needs report a sense of belonging and satisfaction with the school community, along with a higher level of success with new experiences (Rivera et al, 2014). As Agran et al. states, “inclusive education provides a potentially rich and supportive environment in which students can learn, develop, connect, and build community” (2017, p. 3). For those students not placed with their typically developing peers, the library media center can be a place within the school community, where they have the opportunity for programming appropriate to their level and interaction with their typically developing peers. Jones et al. (2010) states, “collaboration benefits faculty in both measurable and immeasurable ways. Partnerships generate support, and support generates professional and personal well-being” (p. 20). Having students with extensive support needs utilize the library

media center benefits teachers through collaboration. Students and teachers alike benefit from the building of community. In understanding the benefits of inclusion of special education students with extensive support needs in the library media center, the question becomes how to implement programming to serve this population of students.

Gaps in Research

Much of the research about inclusive practices for students with special needs focuses on inclusion within a regular education classroom. Some research (Kurth et al., 2019; Taub et al., 2017) identifies a lack of clarity in what types of services, opportunities, and aids should be used to help students with extensive support needs achieve in the least restrictive environment. Many of the articles that do include information about inclusion of students with special needs relating to the school library examine accommodations for physical, visual, or auditory needs (Hill, 2012). As the drive for schools to be more inclusive for special needs students continues (Kurth et al., 2019), it is important to understand the role of the library media center in that process. Additional research is needed to understand how library media specialists can support students with autism, intellectual disabilities, and developmental delays and these students' teachers. This research can then be used to promote inclusive library practices in K-12 schools.

Summary

This chapter explained the process used to identify literature for the literature review. It showed the prevalence of special needs students, particularly those with autism, developmental delays, and intellectual disabilities and reviewed the requirement of IDEA for LRE. Examples for how the researched information presented both academic and social supports were underscored. The library media specialist is in a unique position to support those students with autism, developmental delays, and intellectual disabilities. By comparing resources delineating

best practice for the library media specialists and inclusive practices and accommodations for special education in K-12 schools, a picture can be gleaned for how students with extensive support needs can benefit from inclusive library education. Chapter three focuses on the methodology for the study and a prospective timeline for research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of the research is to identify how the K-12 school library media center can benefit K-12 students with autism, developmental delays, and intellectual disabilities.

The research conducted sought to answer the following research questions:

- How are K-12 school libraries currently working with special needs students, particularly those who have autism, developmental delays, and intellectual disabilities?
- If given the opportunity, what ideas do K-12 school libraries have for working with students with autism, developmental delays, and intellectual disabilities?

This chapter presents the method to answer these research questions. The research sought both qualitative and quantitative data from survey information reported from people working in the library media center setting. This chapter explains the data collection and analysis methods, outlines the timeline of the research process, and addresses issues including challenges and limitations.

Methods

To ascertain how the library is meeting the needs of students with extensive support needs, this study identified intersections between information media and special education best practices in how libraries serve this population of students. The studies evaluated came from both special education and information media. The researcher started with consulting articles within the last five years, but broadened the time range to include articles back as far as the year 2000 upon finding a scarcity of studies relating to the specific topic of students with extensive support needs in the library media center. While using articles dating back this far was not ideal, the researcher wanted to ensure consulting enough studies to have an adequate base of knowledge for the topic.

To augment the data collected from the articles, a survey was conducted of media specialists requesting information of how they serve students with extensive support needs. The survey had a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions. The quantitative questions were used to gather information for how often special education students with extensive support needs are in the library and how often library media specialists collaborate with general education and special education teachers on behalf of students with extensive support needs. Qualitative questions requested K-12 librarians to explain what kind of programming and collaboration is currently offered for students with extensive support needs, what challenges they face in working with this population of students, and invited them to share ideas for how, if given the opportunity, the library media center could create learning opportunities for students with extensive support needs.

Data Collection Method

Description of population sample

Participants initially receiving the survey were subscribers to the Information and Technology Educators or Minnesota (ITEM) listserv. This included licensed K-12 school library media specialists, teachers on assignment, or paraprofessionals who subscribe to the listserv. The listserv was chosen as the avenue to deliver the survey in hopes of avoiding phishing concerns at receiving an email from an unknown party. Within the listserv email, the researcher invited the subscribers to participate in the research and provide a link to the Google Form survey. To broaden the number of responses, the researcher encouraged listserv subscribers to forward the survey link to other library media center personnel.

Sample size and selection criteria

To provide a snapshot of how library media centers serve students with extensive support needs, the researcher hoped to have 50 responses from schools across the state. By utilizing snowball sampling, the initial library media center staff invited to participate were also encouraged to share the survey with media center staff in other districts. Survey participants were library media center staff who received and participated in the survey. The population sample represented a variety of settings, rural, suburban, and urban. The respondents were also representative of different grade levels and public and private educational settings.

Delimitations

Before being sent out, the survey was sent to a small pilot group of library media specialists from various districts for revision and correction. This pilot group was compiled with the help of the school library representative for the governing board of the Arrowhead Library System, which is a regional public library organization. The responses from the pilot group were used for revision of survey questions. Survey results focused on how the library media specialist supports learning opportunities for students with extensive support needs. Information extraneous to students with extensive support needs was disregarded.

Confidentiality

To ensure participant anonymity, the researcher did not collect email addresses or names from the survey. The researcher also restricted personal information that may have been added to a survey from the findings of the study. For confidentiality, only the researcher and instructors in an advisory role have been granted access to survey responses.

Assumptions

In conducting the survey, the researcher assumed the participants were honest in their responses and that they only completed the survey once. There was an assumption that the professional organization participants were willing to participate in a survey.

Instrument

The researcher created questions for the survey considering information presented in the research articles, such as Whitver's (2020) questioning of the best method to design library instruction to be 'flexible laboratories of engagement and learning' (p. 384) and Murray's (2002) assertion that collaboration between library media specialists and special education teachers present unique opportunities for students with extensive support needs. Some questions requested demographic information such as grades served. Additional questions will relate to library practice, such as if the library media specialist's schedule is fixed or flexible. These demographic and library practice questions were followed up by some quantitative questions asking about the frequency of serving students with special needs in the library and collaborating with special education teachers. The survey also contained some open-ended qualitative questions about what programming or materials the library media specialist offers for students with special needs and invited ideas for how the library media center could support students with extensive support needs. These questions were asked so participants could share specific examples regarding their work with students with extensive support needs.

The survey was sent to a pilot group of library media specialists with assistance from the school library representative for the Arrowhead Library System. The group contained a combination of current and former library media specialists. The group suggested altering the wording for some of the open-ended questions, as well as testing to make sure the link worked

properly. This allowed feedback on the questions and revision before the final survey was sent out to the survey sampling. Once revised, the survey was disseminated to the sample population.

Timeline

Several steps occurred prior to completion of the research process. The researcher sought approval from the advisory committee for this research as a culminating project summer semester 2023. Upon approval from the advisory committee, the researcher applied for approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the survey.

Institutional Review Board

Because the survey requested responses from human subjects, the researcher has completed training and certification from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher completed an application for IRB approval to conduct the survey. IRB approval was sought in fall semester 2023. Participants were not recruited, and the survey was not sent out until after IRB approval was given.

Data collection

Data collection began once IRB approval was granted. Prior to receiving IRB approval, the researcher sent a message requesting approval to approach members of the Information and Technology Educators of Minnesota (ITEM) organization with a survey. Following IRB approval, the survey was sent through a Google Form via the ITEM listserv. A time frame of two weeks was allowed for survey completion and submission. As the survey was disseminated in October to a group of educators who subscribe to Minnesota based organization listserv, the researcher ensured the survey availability was prior to the two-day break in mid-October. A reminder notice was sent after one week. Initial recipients were also encouraged to share the survey with other library media center staff to increase the quantity of responses. Data was

exported from form responses into Google Sheets. After receiving submissions, the researcher looked for points of intersection amid the data and began to compile the data for analysis.

Analysis

Once surveys were returned, the researcher compiled and organized the data from the quantitative responses using the Google Form analysis tools. These tools compiled the raw data into figures providing percentages of responses. For the qualitative data, the researcher summarized open ended responses, looking for prevalent concepts. These overarching ideas became the codes that guided compilation and organization of the responses. The results of the data are descriptive rather than inferential. Responses were analyzed and reported in spring 2024 semester.

Anticipated Challenges

Limitations

One limitation for the study was once the surveys are sent out, they were no longer in the researcher's control. There may have been respondents who could not respond in the required time. There also may have been library media center staff who do not work with this particular population of special education students at all and did not feel comfortable completing the survey. Through snowball sampling, requesting initial recipients forward the survey to others, the researcher hoped to engage a wider audience and gain a broader response base.

Omissions

The researcher requested respondents be staff members working in K-12 library media centers. This excluded the ideas and opinions of special education and general education teachers. Through using the ITEM listserv, the survey primarily went to Minnesota library media center staff. Some additional library media center personnel may have been reached through

initial recipients forwarding the survey, but there are library media center staff that will not have received an invitation to complete the survey.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the proposed research process. The researcher used information learned from published studies to create a survey to be disseminated to library media center staff regarding their experiences working with students with extensive support needs. The researcher conducted the survey via a Google Form through the ITEM listserv and requested participants forward the survey to other library media center staff who may have information to share. The chapter also discussed some of the potential challenges of the study, such as omitting information from special education and general education teachers. The timeline of the study was included. Results of the study were compiled by the end of fall semester 2023.

This study seeks to clarify how library media specialists provide learning opportunities to students with extensive support needs. By conducting this research process, the researcher examined how library media specialists work with students with extensive support needs and more broadly, drew attention to the need for inclusive library education for students with extensive support needs in K-12 schools.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology for creating and disseminating the survey to understand how library media centers are working with students with extensive support needs. This chapter describes the findings of that survey. The survey was disseminated using the ITEM listserv and snowball sampling. As a part of the survey, the researcher requested participants forward the survey to additional library staff members who may not subscribe to the ITEM listserv. The survey defined students with extensive support needs as students with autism, developmental delay, or intellectual disability who require a significant amount of support and may qualify for their state's alternate achievement assessment.

Within the two-week allotted time frame, twenty-five people responded to the survey. The only demographic information recorded from participants was the grade level configuration of their school and if their schedule is fixed, flexible, or a combination of the two. Of those twenty-five responses, 28% work with high school age students only, 16% work with middle school age students only, 44% work with elementary school age students only, and 12% work with elementary, middle, and high school age students. Of these respondents, 36% have a fixed schedule with regular classes scheduled for 85% or more of their time, 44% of respondents have a flexible schedule allowing for collaboration and classes scheduled on an as needed basis, and 20% of respondents have a mixed schedule with some scheduled classes, but also flexible time for collaboration.

Findings

Direct interaction

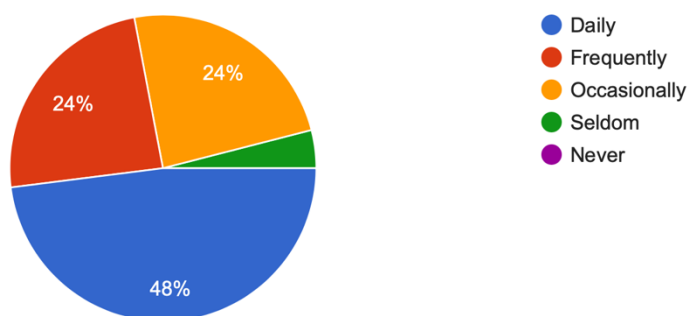
When asked about direct interaction with students with extensive support needs, nearly half the respondents, 48%, reported working with students with extensive support needs on a daily basis. Extensive support needs were defined as students with autism, developmental delay, or intellectual disability who require a significant amount of support and may qualify for the state's alternative achievement assessment per Kurth et al., 2019 stated earlier in the paper. Those respondents who reported working with students with extensive support needs frequently or occasionally were equal at 24%, and only 4% of survey respondents reported seldom working with this population of students.

Figure 1

Direct Interaction for Students with Extensive Support Needs

How often do you directly interact with students with extensive support needs?

25 responses



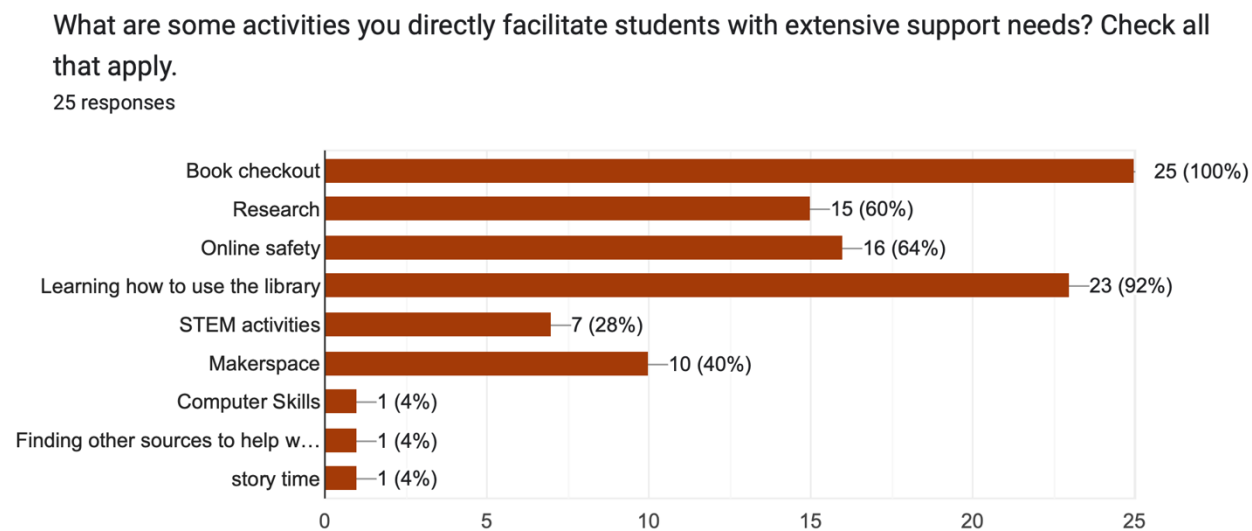
Note. The frequency of direct interaction between library media center staff and students with extensive support needs is denoted by percentage of participants self-reporting.

Activities facilitated

A list of options was presented and respondents had the ability to add their own to share what activities they facilitate directly with students with extensive support needs. All respondents reported facilitating book check out with an additional 92% also stating they help students with extensive support needs learn how to use the library. Teaching online safety skills was reported by 64% of respondents, and guiding research with students was reported by 60%. From the survey responses, there were 40% who indicated they facilitate extensive support needs students with makerspace activities, and 28% reported facilitating STEM activities with this population of students. In addition to the suggested options, three additional activities, teaching computer skills, finding other sources to support understanding information, and story time, were also reported by one respondent each.

Figure 2

Directly Facilitated Activities for Students with Extensive Support Needs.



Note. The number of participants reporting and percentage of each activities to the overall number of responses is shown.

Collaboration

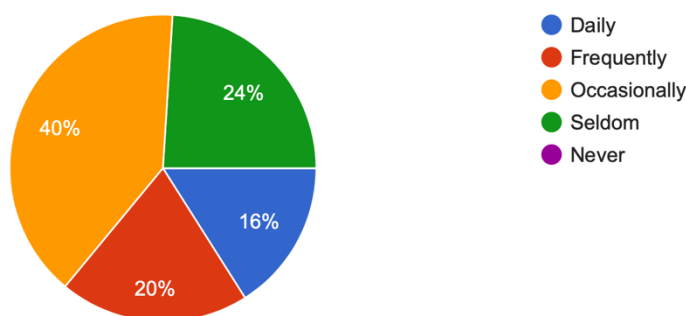
When asked how frequently library media staff collaborate with special education teachers or paraprofessionals of students with extensive support needs, all respondents reported collaboration to varying degrees. Occasional collaboration was the most widely reported at 40%. Seldom collaboration was reported by 24% of respondents, and 20% reported frequent collaboration. Daily collaboration was reported by 16% of respondents.

Figure 3

Collaboration Special Education Teachers or Paraprofessionals

How often do you collaborate with special education teachers or paraprofessionals of students with extensive support needs?

25 responses



Note. Frequency of collaboration between special education teachers and paraprofessionals to library media center staff is shown as a percentage of participants self reporting.

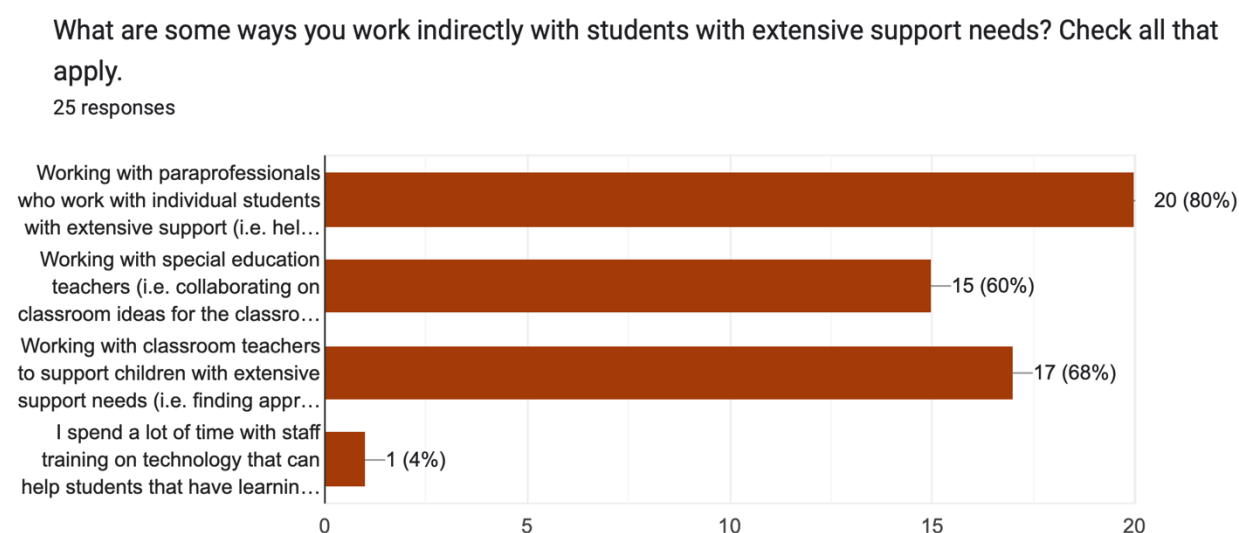
Indirect work

When asked the ways that library media center staff work indirectly with students with extensive support needs, 80% of those who completed the survey reported working with

paraprofessionals who work with individual students with extensive support needs. The next highest percentage of collaboration reported was with classroom teachers at 68%. Collaboration with special education teachers was reported by 60% of respondents. One respondent additionally stated spending time training staff on technology that can help students.

Figure 4

Indirectly Work with Students with Extensive Support Needs



Note. The number of participants and percentage of overall responses for how library media center staff work indirectly with students with extensive support needs is shown.

Available resources

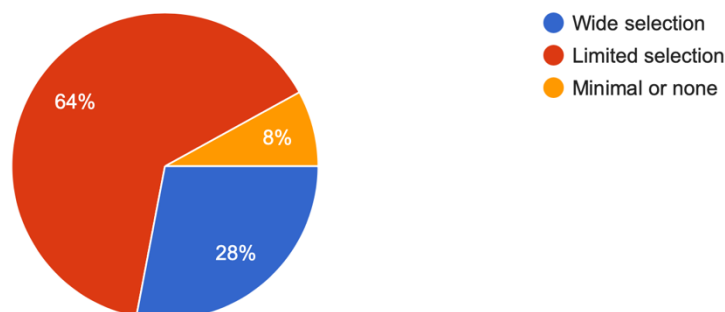
Library media center staff were asked about their library collection's selection of appropriate reading level library resources for students with extensive support needs. The majority of respondents, 64%, reported having a limited selection. An additional 28% of respondents reported having a wide selection, and 8% of respondents reported having a minimal selection or no appropriate reading level resources.

Figure 5

Selection of Appropriate Reading Level Resources

Do you have appropriate reading level library resources for students with extensive support needs in your library collection?

25 responses



Note. The size of the library media center's selection of appropriate reading level resources is denoted for the percentage of participants who reported.

Current interactions

When asked how they currently work with students with extensive support needs, the library media center staff who responded to the survey reported several different ways they work with students with extensive support needs. Over half of the respondents reported individually helping students with extensive support needs choose appropriate books and resources from the library media center. Many of the respondents reported working paras, special education teachers, and regular education teachers to find appropriate resources for students at their reading ability level. Some respondents reported having a designated story time or scheduled meeting time reserved for those students with extensive support needs. There were several library staff members who described hands on activities they use with students with extensive support needs. One respondent described STEM activities students use in the makerspace. A few of the

respondents reported having sensory resources available for students as a calming place. One respondent described use of a therapy dog in the library available for students with extensive support needs. Other ways staff reported working with students with extensive support needs was with media and technology, ranging from helping students use applications or technology to support their learning to leading online safety lessons.

Challenges

When asked about challenges they face in working with students with extensive support needs, the most common responses related to time, training, and resources. Forty percent of respondents described difficulties with having sufficient time to address students' needs, especially when limited to fixed schedule or having full classes. Having adequate resources for the variety of needs of students with extensive support needs was the next largest challenge described. Respondents also cited a need for training and support for them to learn how to work with students' needs. Additional challenges such as students with extensive support needs not being brought into the library media center space with their peers, students resisting help or not understanding content, and staff being too busy for collaboration were mentioned.

Rewards

When asked to provide some examples about what has been rewarding about working with students with extensive support needs, the most prevalent answer from respondents was the enjoyment students with extensive support needs have from participating in activities in the library media center. Respondents described how rewarding they found the relationships formed, not only between staff and student, but also between typical students and those with extensive support needs. Survey responses describe smiles and joy from students for being able to participate. They detail the accomplishments that students with extensive support needs are able

to achieve with support from the library media center and its staff. Survey respondents also cited professional growth through their experiences in working with students with extensive support needs.

Ideas

The final question of the survey asked respondents to share ideas for how their libraries could serve students with extensive support needs. Those who responded to the survey shared a broad variety of ideas. Several responses related to ideas for how to give students more individual attention and support in the library, such as offering alternative checkout times in addition to their mainstream class time, providing push-in time by traveling to the special education classroom, and providing more staffing to support their needs. Additionally, there were suggestions for adding resources such as print resources at appropriate reading levels, audiobooks, and digital resources. There were some responses regarding changes and additions to the library space, such as more accessibility for students with physical disabilities and finding ways to incorporate more sensory items for the students. A number of the responses also shared a desire to have more opportunity for collaboration with both the classes of students with extensive support needs and their teachers. Not all twenty-five respondents chose to share ideas. Seven participants chose not to answer the question, and one person simply responded, "I don't know."

Summary

This chapter summarized the results from the survey regarding students with extensive support needs in the library media center. Twenty-five library staff members contacted initially through the ITEM listserv and then utilizing snowball sampling completed some portion of the survey. Not every question was answered by every respondent in each section. The following

chapter will analyze the results of the survey, make conclusions based on this analysis, and make suggestions for further study.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

This final chapter analyzes the results of the survey and draws conclusions based on the results. It discusses the relationship between the findings of the research to the information discussed in the literature review from chapter two. Recommendations for application of the research and suggestions for further research will also be proposed.

Discussion of results

Research analysis

The focus of this research was to examine how library media centers of K-12 schools are working with students with extensive support needs to provide opportunities to learn through both direct instruction and collaboration with special education and general education teachers.

The research questions included:

- How are K-12 school libraries currently working with students with extensive support needs?
- If given the opportunity, what ideas do K-12 school library staff have for working with students with extensive support needs.

Information to answer the first question was gathered using both open-ended and selection questions relating to how library media center staff work directly and indirectly with students with extensive support needs. Survey respondents were asked to share how often they work with this population of students and their teachers and paraprofessionals, what availability of appropriate reading level library resources they have available, and to describe rewards and challenges of working with students with extensive support needs.

Information for the second question was gathered from the final open-ended question of the survey with invited participants to share ideas for how their library media center if given the opportunity could serve students with extensive support needs.

Current work

Direct interaction and teaching

The questions relating to how library media center staff members currently work with students with extensive support needs highlighted different ways library media center staff work with students with extensive support needs. Most of the responses were related to direct teaching and interaction with students with extensive support needs, of which nearly half (48%) of respondents reported interacting with students with extensive support needs on a daily basis.

All respondents shared directly working with students for book checkout, and nearly all (90%) additionally reported helping students with extensive support needs learn how to use the library. However, the majority of those who responded to the survey (64%) reported having a limited selection of appropriate reading level library resources available for students with extensive support needs. Only seven respondents reported having a wide selection. From those seven respondents, only two served middle or high school students in their library media center.

In addition to helping students with extensive support needs learn skills for using the library and checking out books, survey respondents also reported ways they work with this population with technology. Some respondents described direct teaching for students with extensive support needs with technology. Some examples they listed included how to use MackinVIA, that school's online platform for digital ebooks and audiobooks, teaching student how to build Google Slide presentations and coding, as well as using technology to communicate

with students. Online safety and media classes were additional ways library media center staff reported working with this population of students.

Indirect support

In addition to their direct teaching and interaction with students with extensive support needs, participants of the survey also shared ways they indirectly work to support this population of students. Overall, the amount of time spent on collaboration with teachers and paraprofessionals was less than the direct interaction with students. Only 36% reported daily or frequent collaboration. Occasional collaboration was reported by 40% of respondents, and 24% reported seldom collaboration.

Of that collaborative time, most respondents (80%) worked with paraprofessionals who work with students with extensive support needs. Work with classroom teachers to support children with extensive support needs was reported by 68% of survey participants. Additionally, 60% of survey participants reported working with special education teachers. One participant reported training staff on technology that can help students with learning differences.

In the open-ended question regarding how library media staff work with students with extensive support needs, some participants included more specific information about what kind of indirect support and collaboration they provide. One respondent share spending time in direct planning with special education teachers and informal conversations with paraprofessionals. Another survey participant shared their work in collaborating with the students' paraprofessionals to modify curriculum expectations to their particular needs.

Additional indirect support was shared through descriptions of non-reading related resources available to students with extensive support needs. One survey participant who works with high school age students described 'Brain Bins' available for students of different abilities

can work on with their paras during free unscheduled times throughout the day. That person also described having a calming area available in the library for students with sensory issues.

Likewise, another participant reported adding new seating for different types of sensory needs. A survey participant from a middle school setting reported having a therapy dog available in the library media center on Mondays and Fridays for students. These are unique options for students with extensive support needs and the teachers and paraprofessionals that work with them.

Challenges

Survey participants also shared challenges they have in working with students with extensive support needs. The most common concerns, reported by 40% of respondents, were time-related. Some survey participants acknowledged time as the challenge of working with individuals with extensive support needs amid many additional students and large class sizes. One respondent wrote, “the amount of time these students require can be more than I have during the day and/or they require focused individual attention, but I am interrupted OFTEN (at least every five minutes)..” Survey participants additionally cited time constraints as a challenge for collaborating with teachers and paraprofessionals, both to share information about what the library media center can support the teachers with and for the teachers to share needs of their students. A response from one participant read, “The special education teachers have so much on their plate that it is difficult to be able to collaborate...” One survey participant with a flexible schedule reported needing to rely on the classroom teachers to communicate the needs of their students, since this person did not have access to the students’ accommodations and IEP information.

Another common challenge reported by 32% of survey participants was lack of resources for students with extensive support needs. Often the lack of resources focused on budget for

reading resources. Print resources such as braille books, social-emotional learning books, board books were mentioned, along with library media centers needing a broader selection of appropriate reading level books. Some respondents shared their ability to use interlibrary loan as a way to offer an expanded collection of books to what is currently in their collection. A few participants also expressed a desire to purchase more digital resources, such as ebooks and audiobooks.

The need for additional training and staffing was mentioned by 28% of respondents. Some survey participants expressed a need for additional training, ranging from being informed about student needs to needing more training in instruction. Often staffing concerns related to the challenge of meeting individual needs of the students with extensive support needs. As one participant wrote, “If they do not have a para with them it is often times difficult to find enough time to help them individually and attend to the needs of the rest of the class.” Other survey participants noted concerns with staffing due to paraprofessionals being pulled from classes and challenges related to turnover of staff and para support.

A few additional types of challenges were given by survey respondents. One participant mentioned that there are times students with extensive support needs are not brought to the library media center with their peer group. Another expressed challenges faced when kids avoid help due to the stigma of a disability. An additional concern addressed was the students not always understanding the way the library media center works or how to care for the books.

Rewards

As part of the survey participants were asked to share what is rewarding about working with students with extensive support needs. The most frequent response (56%) related to the students’ enthusiasm for their participation in library media activities. Survey participants

described the joy on students' faces when they were told a book could be ordered for them and their excitement for books that are interesting to them. One respondent shared how students will come and share extensive presentations they have created about topics that interest them. One response stated, "they are proud of themselves with reading a book or understanding information from a source. They are able to participate and feel a part of the class."

The library media staff who responded also described the gratification they feel when being able to assist the students in being successful. These survey responses share communication breakthroughs and relationships built between student and staff. As one participant said, "I love being able to find the right resource for a student that makes them successful in the classroom." Another respondent shared a story about taking time to work with a student to find books that student is interested in, can read, and be successful.

Many survey participants found the relationships formed rewarding. As one respondent pointed out, the library media center staff often sees students for several years in a row, although the students may change classroom teachers. Respondents shared the joy of 'ah-ha' moments and contentedness of the library media center being a place where they can, "be comfortable, feel safe, heard, and understood." The respondents also shared the rewards of students with extensive support needs interactions with their peers. One respondent wrote about, "watching the other students jump in to help tenderly and compassionately."

Another reward the survey participants shared was how they felt they grew as a professional. One respondent said, "I have grown in my ability to understand and accommodate a wide variety of students and honed my craft through supporting these students." Serving a wide variety of needs and providing different accommodations helps library media staff to develop skills that support their mainstream work as well.

Ideas

The respondents to the survey offered many ideas as to how their library media centers could serve students with extensive support needs. Many of the responses made suggestions for broadening the selection of the library media center collection to better serve the interests and reading levels of students with extensive support needs. These suggestions included purchasing more high interest/low reading level books, building more audiobooks and ebooks into the collection, and purchasing educational databases to support learning for this population of students.

An additional theme of many responses was to offer additional time to this population of students. One idea was to offer alternative check out times and library media center availability to provide the library media center staff a greater opportunity to give the students more attention and support. Another respondent suggested being able to push-in to special education classrooms to support what was happening in the classroom. This additional time was also mentioned through collaboration with the classes and teachers. Surveying staff to ask about ideas to support students with extensive support needs was suggested.

Some ideas focused on the library media center space and staffing. One survey participant suggested finding ways to incorporate more sensory items. Another suggestion was to provide areas more conducive to quiet work and accessibility. Ideas relating to how students could access staff, suggesting finding a way students could request assistance without drawing attention to themselves or offering tools for different types of expression were also shared by some survey participants. Several respondents shared a desire at increasing library media center staffing.

These various shared ideas of what library media staff would like to do to support students with extensive support needs exhibits the drive to provide learning opportunities and resources for this population of students.

Relationship between findings and literature review

There were several parallels between the survey findings and the research discussed in the literature review from chapter two of this document. One aspect from the literature review that was mentioned repeatedly within the study was how students with extensive support needs having an opportunity to participate in the library media center leads to opportunities for not only the population of special education students, but also other students and staff. Several survey participants enumerated the excitement of the students with extensive support needs at the opportunity to participate in library media activities. Respondents shared about building relationships and connecting with students year after year. One of the studies cited in the literature review stated, “When teachers concentrate on those whose access has been traditionally excluded, they create learning opportunities for everyone” (Whitver, 2020, p. 388). This sentiment was reiterated in the study through a respondent who stated, “These students are often available for more individual support time, so I have been able to develop skills and relationships that extend to my mainstream work.” Additional responses recounted how it is also rewarding to see mainstream students stepping in to help their classmates with extensive support needs.

Some of the survey responses from the question about challenges library media staff face in working with students with extensive support needs aligned with earlier cited research. One respondent shared that a challenge was, “students are not brought to class with their peer group.” This statement reflects how a student may lose the opportunity to participate in library activities due to choices about least restrictive environment. Additional respondents enumerated

challenges about not having enough support for students with extensive support needs in the library media center.

Limitations of the study

A major limitation of this study was the small size of the survey sample. The invitation through the ITEM listserv and snowball sampling yielded only 25 responses. This small sample size was magnified when analyzing the data according to demographic information, such as what levels the library media staff members serve and the kind of schedule the library media staff members have. All participation in the survey was voluntary, so information from library media staff who did not receive the survey or were unable to participate in the available time frame were missed.

The survey also did not clarify the role of the person completing the survey. The respondent's role in the library media center, may impact the responses of survey questions. For example, if some respondents are paraprofessionals or hourly aides working in the library, their contract may not allow time for collaboration with other staff members in the building. The contracts of the school may also prohibit them from teaching classes.

Another limitation included the response options given regarding the time library media center staff spend in interacting with students with extensive support needs and the professionals who work with these students. Using terms such as 'seldom', 'occasionally', and 'frequently' was helpful for ease of completing a survey in a short amount of time, but subjective. What one respondent may consider occasionally; another may call seldom.

Recommendation for Application

The results of this study, though on a small scale, provide a snapshot of the different ways K-12 library media centers are currently working with students with extensive support

needs. The responses underscore the varied opportunities and library media center programs and services available to students with extensive support needs, as well as their teachers and paraprofessionals. These results invite dialogue about how library media center staff can utilize their resources to best serve this population of students. Discussion may occur regarding finding ways for school library media centers to access appropriate reading leveled materials or how library media center staff can collaborate with teachers and paraprofessionals of students with extensive support needs. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for more time for library media staff to meet the needs of this population of students.

One implication within the survey is that many library media centers have a limited or minimal selection of appropriate reading level resources available for students with extensive support needs. This suggests that library media centers need access to a broader variety of resources to serve this population of their school's students either through increased funding or utilizing interlibrary loan options.

The study offers suggestions from study participants as to ways library media staff can work with students with extensive support needs. These suggestions range from alternative check out times and push-in work in special education classrooms to providing more sensory items and improving furniture and space in the library media center. These shared ideas from study participants can be an impetus to new ideas for other K-12 library media center staff.

The research also highlights that despite the challenges library media center staff face in serving students with extensive support needs, there are many rewards of inclusion, not only for the students, but also for other students and the library staff themselves through in the library media program. This part of the study validates the need to continue striving to best serve this population of students.

Future Research

This research provided a glimpse of how library media center staff are working with students with extensive support needs, and there are many opportunities for further research. It would be beneficial to broaden the response base. This would provide insight into trends rather than simply a glimpse. Additionally, while this study focused on responses from library media center staff, research focusing on paraprofessionals and special education teachers about the benefits of the library media center and its programming for students with extensive support needs would be insightful. Another worthwhile avenue of study would be to survey case workers who work with special needs adults to determine life skills education beneficial to employment that library media programs and services could help support.

Survey respondents reported a variety of ways they worked with students with extensive support needs. Additional research should focus on determining the impact of library media education on academic achievement and social-emotional growth of students with extensive support needs. Such research would aid library media specialists to request access to additional resources and provide more extensive programs, as well as, provide rationale in advocating for students with extensive support needs to access the library media center and its programming and resources as an integral part of their education.

Conclusions and Significance

The library media center is a place that can enrich the education of students with extensive support needs. As a part of the school community, students with extensive support needs deserve to have the benefit of library media center resources and education, and this research shows the varying ways that library media center staff are providing learning opportunities to this population of students. The study identifies areas of need, such as access to

appropriate reading level resources and additional time to be devoted to working with this population of students and collaborating with their paraprofessionals and teachers. Many of the rewards of working with students with extensive support needs were shared by respondents to the survey. The research also suggested additional ideas for how K-12 library media centers could work with students with extensive support needs if given the opportunity and resources. This research brings attention to how the library media center can serve students with extensive support needs.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)
720 4th Avenue South AS 101, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

September 21, 2023

Kara Ronning
Email: kara.ronning@go.stcloudstate.edu

Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Hill

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects.

Project Title: How Libraries Support Students with Extensive Support Needs

Your project has been: Approved

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Exempt

SCSU IRB#: 54149612

Please read through the following important information concerning IRB projects .

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc) by completing an IRB Modification/Revision request Form: https://webportalapp.com/webform/irb_modification_request_form
- The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

Feel free to contact the IRB for assistance at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding for expedited response. Additional information can be found on the IRB website <https://www.stcloudstate.edu/irb/default.aspx>.

Sincerely,

IRB Chair:

William Collis-Prather

Program Director

Applied Clinical Research

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Claudia Tomany

Associate Provost for Research

Dean of Graduate Studies

Appendix B: Survey Questions

You are invited to complete this brief research survey to gather information from K-12 library media center staff about how school library media centers serve special education students with extensive support needs, such as students with autism, developmental delay, or intellectual disability who require a significant amount of support and may qualify for your state's alternate achievement assessment. The purpose of this research is to ascertain how library media centers are working with this population of students.

The survey is 11 questions and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. A benefit for participating is sharing ideas as to how your library works with students with extensive support needs, and there is nominal risk for participation. Your responses of this survey are anonymous and no identifying information will be collected. Your participation in the survey is voluntary, and you may choose to stop without penalty.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or are interested in learning about the research results, please contact Kara Ronning at kara.ronning@isd701.org.

By completing this online survey, I confirm that I have read this informed consent form, am a legal adult, and voluntarily agree to participate in this research survey.

1. What level of students does your library media center serve? (Check all that apply)

High School

Middle School

Elementary

2. Which best describes your schedule?

Fixed schedule-regular scheduled classes 85% of time or more

Flexible schedule-time for collaboration and classes scheduled on an as needed basis

Mixed schedule-some scheduled classes and flexible time for collaboration

3. How often do you directly interact with students with extensive support needs?

Daily

Frequently

Occasionally

Seldom

Never

4. How often do you collaborate with special education teachers or paraprofessionals of students with extensive support needs?

Daily

Frequently

Occasionally

Seldom

Never

5. What are some activities you directly facilitate with students with extensive support needs? (Check all that apply)

Book checkout

Research

Online safety

Learning how to use the library

STEM activities

Makerspace

Other

6. What are some ways you work indirectly with students with extensive support needs?

(Check all that apply)

Working with paraprofessionals who work with individual students with extensive support (i.e. helping to select appropriate books, giving ideas for how to help with research, etc.)

Working with special education teachers (i.e. collaborating on classroom ideas for the classroom, sharing curriculum aids, etc.)

Working with classroom teachers to support children with extensive support needs (i.e. finding appropriate leveled texts, sharing curriculum aids, etc.)

7. Does your library media center have appropriate reading level library resources for students with extensive support needs in your library collection?

Wide selection

Limited selection

Minimal or none

8. How do you currently work with students with extensive support needs?
9. What challenges have you faced in working with students with extensive support needs?
10. Can you provide some examples about what has been rewarding about working with students with extensive support needs?
11. If given the opportunity, what ideas do you have for how your library media center could serve students with extensive support needs?

Share This Survey

This survey was shared through the Information and Technology Educators of MN listserv. If you know of someone who works in a K-12 library media center setting, who would have information to share, please forward the link to them.

<https://forms.gle/QGfkF66HjUwRt94MA>

Appendix C: Email Correspondence

Dear Educator:

I am a graduate student at St. Cloud State University in the Information Media program. My culminating project focuses on how library media centers support students with extensive support needs, such as those with autism, intellectual disability, or developmental delays who require a significant amount of support and may qualify for your state's alternate achievement assessment.

If you are a staff member in a K-12 library media center, you are invited to participate in a brief eleven question survey regarding how your library media center serves students with extensive support needs.

[Link to Extensive support needs survey](#)

The responses of the survey are anonymous and no identifying information will be collected. Your participation in the survey is voluntary and very much appreciated. There are no risks for participating in this survey, nor will there be any compensation. Submitting the survey implies consent to participate. You may choose not to participate without penalty. I respectfully ask that you would respond within the next two weeks. I would also encourage you to share this survey with other K-12 library media specialists.

If you have questions regarding the survey, please contact Kara Ronning at kara.ronning@isd701.org.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Kara Ronning

Kara Ronning
Hibbing High School Library Media Specialist
St. Cloud State Information Media student

Appendix D: Follow-up email to participants

Dear Educator:

Thank you to those of you who have responded to the survey regarding students with extensive support in the library media center. Your quick response is appreciated.

If you have not yet had an opportunity to respond, there is still time. The link will remain active for the remainder of this week. Please use the link below to complete the brief survey.

[Link to Extensive support needs survey](#)

Also, if you are able to forward this survey link to other K-12 library media specialists, it would be greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Kara Ronning

Kara Ronning
Hibbing High School Library Media Specialist
St. Cloud State Information Media student
kara.ronning@isd701.org

Appendix E: Raw Data

1. What level of students does your library media center serve? (Check all that apply)

Level served	Percentage	Count
High School	40%	10
Middle School	28%	7
Elementary School	56%	14

2. Which best describes your schedule?

Schedule type	Percentage	Count
Fixed Schedule	36%	9
Flexible Schedule	44%	11
Mixed Schedule	20%	5

3. How often do you directly interact with students with extensive support needs?

Frequency of interaction	Percentage	Count
Daily	48%	12
Frequently	24%	6
Occasionally	24%	6
Seldom	4%	1
Never	0%	0

4. How often do you collaborate with special education teachers or paraprofessionals of students with extensive support needs?

Frequency of collaboration	Percentage	Count
Daily	16%	4
Frequently	20%	5
Occasionally	40%	10
Seldom	24%	6
Never	0%	0

5. What are some activities you directly facilitate with students with extensive support needs? (Check all that apply)

Activities facilitated	Percentage	Count
Book checkout	100%	25
Research	60%	15
Online safety	64%	16
Learning how to use the library	92%	23
STEM activities	28%	7
Makerspace	40%	10
Other	12%	3

Written answers for 'Other' responses:

Computer skills

Finding other sources to help with seeing the information such as Bookshare

Story time

6. What are some ways you work indirectly with students with extensive support needs?

(Check all that apply)

Indirect work with ESN students	Percentage	Count
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Working with paraprofessionals who work with individual ESN students	80%	20
Working with special education teachers	60%	15
Working with classroom teachers to support children with extensive support needs	68%	17
Other	4%	1

Written answers for 'Other' responses:

I spend a lot of time with staff training on technology that can help students that have learning differences of all sorts.

7. Does your library media center have appropriate reading level library resources for students with extensive support needs in your library collection?

Breadth of appropriate reading level library resources	Percentage	Count
Wide selection	28%	7
Limited selection	64%	16
Minimal or none	8%	2

8. How do you currently work with students with extensive support needs?

Text responses:

Unfortunately, our private school does not have the resources to support students with this level of academic need, so there are a few students occasionally, but mostly students with dyslexia, dysgraphia who have accommodations.

typically during their classtime, help choose books,

We have some students that are vision impaired and we have provided books that are appropriate for their needs.

Students with needs come into my media classes with their gen ed class. Most extensive needs students have a 1:1 ESP for support during class. I teach these the same as any other student, and provide accommodations as needed.

I provide Media Orientation and allow them time to browse and checkout

helping students with STEM and Makerspace activities, providing technology support for these students, providing a safe space for students with sensory issues so they can regulate emotions or have a calming area, helping students find books and resources to match interests. I have "Brain Bins" that students of different abilities can work on with paras during their free unscheduled times throughout the day

Primarily by sharing resources with SPED staff, as well as occasional library visits. In addition to showing students how to find print books in the library, I teach them how to use MackinVIA, our online platform for digital ebooks and audiobooks.

Direct planning with SPED teachers, informal conversations with paras, conversations with students through technology/speech devices, Sets of materials for their use in my classroom when they are mainstreamed.

Our school does not have a visible population of students with extensive support needs, but they are there. I work with the learning support specialists to know which students need additional support and intentionally meet with them during research projects to make sure they are set up for success.

I rely on the classroom teacher to communicate the needs of their students to me. Since i do not have a fixed schedule, I don't see them regularly and i don't know their needs.

Some of them are mainstreamed and come with their General Education Classes and I also have a class of ASD students that I see 2 times per week

Modifying curriculum expectations to their particular needs in collaboration with their paras.

I assist with book checkout, research, online safety lessons, collection management and interlibrary loans to meet the needs of each student as well as the teacher.

Read IEPs

All students come to library class. Some students with extensive needs have a para with them in the library. I teach the same lesson to all students and then modify the assignments when necessary for individual students.

I often do a lot of one-on-one work with these students during work time when it comes to library assignments and computer work (building Google Slide presentations, coding, etc.). I also spend time with these students helping them find high interest books at the appropriate reading level.

Weekly

I teach weekly 1 hour media/tech preps for all grades/classes. My SPED students are part of those classes, some with assistant support and some without.

Help find books, teach computer skills directly, manage different students during storytime

Technology classes, book checkout, therapy dog on Mon and Fri

Students in center-based classrooms (mostly ASD) come to library with their gen ed class with a paraprofessional

Building collection of resources accessible to these students.

I have them in my Media classes as well as when they come into the library looking for sources and materials. I have also added new seating for different types of sensory.

Many of our special education classes come to the library for books. Our DCD students regularly come for story time, which I tell them is to get their help evaluating our picture books to decide if I should keep them. I have also read books with other classes that may not be able to read books at that level for themselves.

Mostly just book check outs.

9. What challenges have you faced in working with students with extensive support needs?

Test responses:

Needing more training in instruction and obtaining resources for them - like audiobooks.

I try to order books for our collection that will serve them (ie braille books, SEL, board books)

We just don't have enough resources

Not given information ahead of class of needs.

Our physical collection is limited, but we have some good databases that support their teachers and the students

the amount of time these students require can be more than I have during the day and/or they required focused individual attention, but I am interrupted OFTEN (at least every five minutes) and serving multiple roles in the school so I cannot

My budget is limited, which makes it hard to address such a wide range of needs.

Lack of time to get to know these students and their needs. Turnover of staff and para support.

The visibility and stigma of having any sort of diagnosis can cause some kids to avoid help.

The biggest challenge is that i do not have a relationship with them.

The mainstreamed students could really use support when they come to the class. Class sizes are big, so it is a struggle to give them the support they need.

When students are not brought to class with their peer group.

Their likes and preferred topics are so varied and change from month to month, I feel like I cannot keep up with my library's collection as my only source. We have a great ILL system so I can request books from any of the elementary or middle schools which helps a lot.

Time...800 students

If they do not have a para with them it is often times difficult to find enough time to help them individually and attend to the needs of the rest of the class

Having sufficient time to address their needs when I am on a fixed schedule and had a class and 1/3 of students (class size > 30).

support

Limited parts professional and SPED teacher availability. We are short staff and find

Sometimes hard with other needs in the classroom

Paras being pulled from my classes or not having the right tools to help

adjusting lessons to meet their needs

Limited resources, teachers not aware of how I can support them, poorly staffed to reach out to classrooms for collaboration for more direct teaching

The special education teachers have so much on their plate that it is difficult to be able to collaborate or set a time to collaborate.

Not always understanding how a library works and how to care for library books.

Balancing my budget with the needs of the school. I need to replace books, buy more lower level books for all students and even more early readers for some students. There is just not enough to go around. eBooks are not the solution or answer. Print materials are needed but money isn't there.

10. Can you provide some examples about what has been rewarding about working with students with extensive support needs?

Text responses:

Students who have limitations in one area may have strengths in another area, possibly because they have learned how to manage or work around what has impeded them.

Several students really like pushing the button on their communicator iPad that says, "I'd like to check out a book now" Big smiles. We had one high school student who used to do all our shredding. He would get so excited when he'd see how much we had for him to do. His attitude toward his job would remind all of us to be as enthusiastic about what we get to do.

I love to see their smiling faces when they find a book that they love

I love being able to find the right resource for a student that makes them successful in the classroom.

They get very excited about all the books, especially when I tell them that I will order a book in their interest.

I have grown in my ability to understand and accommodate a wide variety of students and honed my craft through supporting these students. These students are often available for more individual support time so I have been able to develop skills and relationships that can extend to my mainstream work.

It's always rewarding when students get excited about something they find in the library (even if it's just the beanbag)!

Communication breakthroughs with the students. Daily greetings in the hallway. Being a teacher who can connect year after year.

Last week I had a student come in and disclose that they hate to read due to dyslexia and focus issues but wants to start figuring out how to enjoy reading. We spent 20 minutes together picking out two books that she was excited to read and that are also available through Learning Ally so that she will enjoy it!

They have the biggest hearts, are full of joy, enjoy both books and technology.

Watching students interact with one another and be helpful and kind in aiding their peers.

So often they think it is the best thing in the world to be able to check out a book at the library. Compared to most 9th & 10th graders this is a breath of fresh air.

Helping them find books that they want to read/are excited about is so rewarding.

Their excitement for books that are interesting to them feels greater than other students. I have many students with extensive support needs who really enjoy working on Chromebooks and they often come to me with extensive presentations they created about topics that interest them.

Students enjoy being a part of the experience which is vastly different if they were to come with their assigned classroom. I provide a storytime/check-out (occasional activity) for special support needs classes. Due to time constraints I schedule them for a 15 minute weekly visit.

The ah-ah moments when kids understand something, the smiles and giggles when they are enjoying a story, the times when a student who rarely speaks, or who doesn't trust easily, or is easily frustrated by assignments or reading behind two be comfortable, feel safe, heard, and understood.

Rewarding is watching the other students jump in to help tenderly and compassionately,

They love the media center. We make a special time for them to do books with Bella(therapy dog) they are involved in my technology classes.

making connections with the students

Seeing their eyes light up when they find a book that they don't expect to be available to them in the school library or that I will purchase a book that they want.

When they are proud of themselves with reading a book or understanding information from a source. They are able to participate and feel a part of the class.

I have developed great relationships with many of our students because of weekly story time. Some have read books with me for four years!

11. If given the opportunity, what ideas do you have for how your library media center could serve students with extensive support needs?

Text responses:

More access to audio books, more physical reminders of digital resources, more printed matter at appropriate reading levels.

Better furniture and space

I do have access to different resources : print, audiobooks, eBook or video within my library catalog.

I believe the media program's responsibility is to have a collection of Hi-Lo books for these students and to purchase educational databases that support their learning.

Areas that are more conducive to quiet work and have even more accessibility for wheelchairs and other disabilities

I would love to schedule more library visits and order more texts in varying levels.

We offer alternative checkout times so students who need more help can get it. Daily checkout for the ones who love books. Class for these students in addition to their mainstream class so that I can give them more attention and support.

I would love to have a bigger budget to purchase audiobooks on Sora so that all books were options for all.

Best thing is to survey staff and ask them about ideas to support them.

Provide more staffing to help support their needs

I use all the tools and strategies I learned in my Elementary Education undergrad as well as during my elementary media student teaching experience to best serve our SPED students.

Resource locating and appropriate level matching, tools that allow different types of expression.

I would do more traveling down to our special education teachers' rooms if I had time to do push-in work.

Story time, activities tied in with story, brain break videos, learning how to find books in the media center. Teachers are encouraged to have students join regular ed class for more rigorous lessons.

I would like more materials to help them when they come in, a wider collection of books and more paraprofessionals paid to help.

I don't know

Collaboration with these classes/groups can take a little more time on my part and the teachers until we get things figured out. It is difficult to find those times with many other demands and expectations.

Finding more ways to incorporate more sensory items for those students. Have a way students would be able to make requests to me without drawing attention to themselves.