

Hickory Elementary
907 South SR 267
Avon, Indiana 46123

August 12, 2004

Dear Doug Johnson,

I have in front of me an article you wrote in November 2001 for *School Library Journal* entitled *It's Good to Be Inflexible*. Given that you are coming to Indiana for the AIME conference in November and that not many attitudes have been changed about the flexible vs. fixed scheduling guilt trip, I am writing to you to request that you address this issue when you are speaking in Indiana.

As one who has worked in both environments, I feel angry and frustrated by the persistence of my peers in their insistence that those in a fixed environment are not doing the job quite up to par. Never have I known more students nor shared more books and lessons with MY students than I have been able to in my current fixed situation. I love it. My colleagues make me feel like crap while all the while, we are losing positions every year here in Indiana and most elementary schools in Southern Indiana already do not have media specialists. That area of the state seems very cut-off from the rest of us. When I worked in a middle school in Southern Indiana, I had to be a cheerleader in order to get teachers to come to the media center. It was just something they had never done before. I finally put our language arts teachers on a fixed schedule. Yes~in a middle school. They came and they loved it, and I learned student's names.

If one were to seriously examine the State Standards for Indiana students in grades k-3, one would have to question the need for a flexible schedule because the standards do not address much research. The need for an open access library for research projects simply isn't there for the younger students. As kids are eased into research in 4th and 5th grades, one would still have to question an entire year's worth of open scheduling for baby-step research projects. What is in the standards in reading, reading, and more reading. That is what I am all about in my library media center.

Younger children need consistency and routine. Remembering library books is tough for kids so checking out and returning on the same day each week helps them to become more responsible. Being exposed to books through mini-lessons helps kids become readers. Listening to me read aloud my very dramatic interpretations of children's literature is a beautiful experience for kids who didn't sit on a lap much when they were very young, listening to an adult read aloud to them. That's how children acquire the strong language skills we want them to have and it continues to help them in their early school years. And even beyond, actually, as research using picture books in the middle school has shown.

The current flexible vs. fixed schedule debate is like the working vs. stay-at-home mom debate. It isn't helpful, no minds are changed, and feelings are hurt. Furthermore, the debate is lopsided and not conducted on a fair-playing field because the powers that be in the professional organizations (ALA, AASL, AIME) are the ones insisting on the flexible schedule while many of us otherwise happy library media specialists try to get a word in every once in a while about what great jobs we are, in fact, doing.

Why isn't there room for dissent in these organizations?

Thank you for reading this. I have been a big fan of your since I discovered [The Indispensable Librarian](#) back in 1999, the first year I wrote program goals for my library, which I did following your seven categories. I am looking forward to listening to you in November at the AIME conference.

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