Facility Evaluation

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Facility Plan Evaluation

The School and the School Media Center

Southeast Middle School was built in the late 1960's. Last year, Southeast Middle School

experience a remodeling effort funded through education bonds. The remodeling included new

construction of a new administration suite, a new media center, and a new auxiliary gymnasium. The

remodeling project also expanded the current cafeteria as well as renovated the old second floor media

center into five 21st-Century classrooms that include such features as interactive white boards,

document cameras, projection equipment and an audio enhancement system.

Southeast Middle School is the second largest middle school in Guilford County, with enrollment

hovering at just over 1,000 students. The student population is made up of approximately 67% white,

25% African-American, and 8% other ethnicities (NC School Report Cards, 2010). Staff also consists of

approximately 75 teachers, with additional specialists, and administrative personnel (SEMS, General

Information, "Demographics", 2011). The new media center of 6,200 total square feet opened in August

on the first floor of the school near the new office. It houses a collection of approximately 12,000

volumes in print, a mini lab of 6 computers, and numerous other realia and equipment. Two new 21st

Century computer labs of 30 workstations each adjoin the library.

The electronic portion of the Southeast Middle School Media program is not fully operational at

this time due to the residual construction wrap-up.   There are glitches in the system that are being

addressed currently. However, all computers are connected to the Guilford County School's network in

which students and staff members have access.

Overview of the Physical Facility

When entering the media center, there is a new security system at the door. Currently, this security system is not operational. This is a result of the operation manual not being given to the librarian following installation. Also, just inside the door is a two foot by six foot cut-out which the librarian refers to as "the make-out corner." The original architectural plan was to provide for a drop-box for book return in this space. The workroom entrance and two bathrooms are to the left. To the right are the display case, the informal reading area, and the display racks for current issues of magazines. The display case is currently unusable. As a residual item of the construction, the keys to the locked display case have not yet been given to the librarian. The casual/informal reading area consists of 4 large comfortable chairs, two end tables, and a large lower level magazine rack filled with twenty-one different titles of magazines.

Past the informal reading area and in direct view of the entrance is the large circulation desk. The return bin is on the end that faces the door. The 19 foot long circulation desk has two computers for checkout and plenty of work space for library staff. From the circulation desk, most areas of the library are in visual sight. The exceptions are the corner where the storage room door is in the back, the bathroom hall way, and the "make-out corner" at the front door. The office and workroom are connected by a door and are directly behind the circulation desk. Both of these rooms have wall to wall windows for visual access of the inside of the library. The office is used by the librarian and the assistant and contains a wall of bookshelves, two desks and chairs, two computers, and one printer in its 216 square feet. The 240 square foot workroom has plenty of counter space and lockable cabinets, a sink, filing space, shelving, and a laminator. In the middle of the workroom is a counter-height island

with four bar stools, a computer, and a colored printer for small group professional and collaborator

meetings.

There are two large group areas within the library. These two large group areas are located in

the center of the library and are separated by the Reference Collection shelving units. Both large group

areas have viewing capabilities of the projection and audio system. This affords for multiple uses such as

whole-class instruction, club or academic meetings, presentations, and book talks. While both large

group areas have tables and seating for thirty-two, one area has four foot square tables with four chairs

each and the other has three foot by six foot rectangular tables with four chairs each. The square table

side occupies approximately 830 square feet and is conducive for accommodating larger groups of small

group activity. The rectangular table side occupies an area of 920 square feet. The rolling shelving of

the Reference Collection that separates the two large group areas is able to be moved in order to

accommodate larger groups in one area with total seating of 82. The drawback to having the two large

group areas so close together is the potential for audio disturbance of one group if the other is

participating in a book talk or other audio presentation.

A small group area is located in the left rear corner of the library. This small group area consists

of two four foot square tables with four chairs each. The small group area occupies about 198 square

feet. The small group area is also in the main collection area, located between the start of the fiction

collection on the parameter and the first row of the non-fiction stacks. Its location could present a

distraction for some working independently or a lack of privacy if needed. The parameter space around

the small group area is limiting for everyone to adequately access the collection. The direction of the

table and closeness to the door and the non-fiction stacks are the main problems.

Like the mini computer lab which currently has six desks that can be used for individual work, the small group area can be used for individual purposes as well. The mini computer lab is located on the wall across from the circulation desk and outside the two computer labs that adjoin the media center. This location allows for class sizes greater than the computer lab can house to be within the librarian and/or classroom teacher's view of these students. The mini computer lab has six networked computers for open use. There is also additional non-computer work space and seating for six individual work areas. Long range plans do include adding computer workstations to these work areas.

The two computer labs adjoining the library, along with a third lab located near the first floor instructional classrooms, each contain the 21st Century Technology Package that includes 30 computers, interactive white board, document camera, projection equipment, and voice enhancement. All computers are connected to the Guilford County School network. As part of the library's collection, the school's website provides links to resources such as NCWIseowl, the school district, and other relevant and useful resources for parents, students, and staff. The website and resources within can be accessed from any networked computer in the school as well as from remote locations such as home for easy access.

The fiction collection begins on the backside of the lower level book shelves that separate the left-side large group area from the small group area then circles the parameter of the back and right side walls on low 35 inch tall shelves under the windows and tall six foot shelves on open wall space. The fiction collection ends on the back side of the reference collection shelving that divides the two large group areas. The fiction collection has blue dividers that indicate the start of the next letter in the alphabet. The only other signage in the fiction collection area is that of the Story Collection and the Graphic Novel Collection which are on the front side of the lower level book shelves that separate the

large and small group areas. The non-fiction collection is located on rolling, double sided low shelving

in six to eighteen foot rows four feet apart and four feet in front of the fiction shelving along the back

wall. The only indicator of materials per row is at the front end of the racks which tells the Dewey

Decimal call number range for that set of shelving. These signs are computer-generated. All books are

arranged shelf by shelf in the shelving unit before continuing onto the next shelving unit.

The new library has other designated areas for professional materials, electrical/maintenance,

storage, and media production. The professional materials area is a 140 square foot room located at the

right rear of the library. Included in the professional materials area are a table and four chairs, textbook

supplements, instructional videos and DVDs, professional development material, other professional

resources, and the periodical storage. At this time, Southeast Middle School stores a one year history of

its periodical collections. The periodicals being stored are of subscriptions the library has for current

student interest, such as *Sports Illustrated, J14,* and *Teen Vogue* as well as reference-based journals such

as *National Geographic, Our State,* and *Smithsonian*. Older periodicals needed for research can be

accessed through database links located on the school's website. The electrical/maintenance, storage,

and media production areas are currently off limits. Only authorized maintenance personnel are able to

enter the electrical/maintenance rooms. The 110 square foot storage area houses equipment which

must be retrieved by the librarian or the assistant when requested by teachers or staff. The storage

area is connected to the 330 square foot electrical/maintenance area. The 396 square foot media

production area is still being developed and is not operational at this time. It is unknown what materials

and resources are in this area currently. The old media center did not have such a designated area.

The overall new media center is a spacious and inviting place for students and staff. There is the

potential for a highly successful program. The newness of the facility has lent to the lack of

personalization and unsettledness, but the librarian has plans to correct many of the shortcomings as the "settling in" process continues. Such things as "homey touches" that include pictures and/or artwork on the walls and the plants that the librarian has not brought back from home just yet, as well as the much needed signage and displays are in the works as time allows, final decisions are made, and corrective measures are resolved. At this time, the librarian is waiting to receive the new security system manual and training on its use as well as she is waiting to receive keys to the display case.

Comparison to Standards and Guidelines

Comparing Southeast Middle School's library to the North Carolina IMPACT guidelines shows both strengths and weaknesses. The Southeast Middle School Library has the advantage of its square footage, number of designated areas, and accommodations. However, Southeast Middle School is at a disadvantage technologically, aesthetically, and meeting individual area square footage.

Square Footage

IMPACT suggests that the square footage for schools with over 400 students is between four and six square foot per student (Pg. 83). Southeast's library interior, not including peripherals such as the computer labs, office, or other designated areas, meets this guideline by having a total square footage of 4,670. This meets IMPACT's standards. However, the designated areas within the library do not meet IMPACT's suggested square footage. One example is that IMPACT suggests that large group areas have 143 square feet per table. In Southeast's areas having eight tables, this would require 1,144 square feet (pg. 85).   Therefore, Southeast does not meet the guidelines in regards to individual

designated area space. The following chart compares each area of Southeast's library to the IMPACT

guidelines where specific square footage is recommended.

Designated Area	Southeast's Sq. Ft.	IMPACT's suggested Sq. Ft.
Large group	828 /920	1,144
Small Group	198	150
Production	396	400-600
Administration	216	250
Professional	140	150
Workroom	240	400-600
Storage	110	175

The reason, according to Ms. Crone, Southeast Middle School librarian, is that new school

libraries currently being built within Guilford County are designed for flexibility in their common usage

but with less square footage. This is in direct congruence with Morris (2010) in *Administering the School*

Library Media Center, who emphasizes flexibility repeatedly: "the design of today's school library media

centers stresses openness and flexibility" (pg. 199), especially "the 21st century library will be flexible

and more social space where students will come for multiple activities" (pg. 230).

Designated Areas

IMPACT suggests that libraries have the following fifteen designated area: large group

instruction, reference, story sharing or informal reading, independent work areas, small group activity,

production, periodical storage, administration, circulation, automated catalog, professional, parent

resource area, workroom, display/exhibit, and secure equipment storage and maintenance (pgs. 85-98).

The Southeast Media Center has made good utilization of its space by providing for almost all of these

areas IMPACT guidelines recommends. The exceptions are that Southeast does not officially designate

one of its large instructional areas as a "reference" area. However, both large group areas are in the

reference collection area and one can be used as a reference area if a class is working on a project that

needs access to the reference collection. The production area is still being developed and is unavailable

to students at this time. Current production needs are being limited to computer only activities. Like

the production area, the display area is also unusable at this time. To offset this, books are on display in

various locations throughout the room such as on top of the non-fiction stacks. Lastly, the only IPACT

recommended area not represented within the library itself is the parent resources.   However,

Southeast provides resources for parents through its website. There are no plans to establish a parent

resource area within the library itself.

Accommodations

The furniture in the library was selected with flexibility in mind. Tables, chairs, even the stacks

are on wheels and can be moved to accommodate most needs. Varying the size of tables in group areas

also provides for flexibility in needs and accommodations in arrangement. The current floor plan has

the best layout possible to provide pathways around most activity centers. Main pathways and isles are

well defined and are also ADA accessible. ADA (2002) requires a 32-36 inch space for access along

pathways and between stacks (section 4.3 and 8.5). Southeast currently has 48 inches between its non-

fiction stacks and around the parameter of the collection walls. A five foot pathway runs through the

center of the library.   However, there are a few areas that have somewhat limited parameters. For

example, there is only a two foot pathway around the beginning of the fiction collection due to the small

group area.   Another such area is the access to the reference collection in the large group area with

square tables in which access in certain spots is only 18 inches. While areas appear to be limiting access,

the entire library's design for total flexibility does afford rearranging as need arises.   Minor adjustments

could be made currently to provide more access.

Technology

IMPACT guidelines specify the 'ideal' media center environment for 21st century student

learning. Technology is perhaps where Southeast Middle School's library falls the shortest. IMPACT

suggests that large and small group areas have interactive white boards, computers and a printer, as

well as projection equipment including a screen and two TV monitors (pg. 85 and 88). IMPACT also

suggests that computers in the reference area are at a 3 to 1 ratio of computers for students (pg. 86) as

well as computers in such areas as automated catalog, circulation, administration, workroom,

professional, production, and independent work (pgs. 86-97).

While Southeast Middle School library does a good job with its resources, it does not meet

IMPACT guidelines in technological area.   Its large group area has a laptop, projection equipment, an

individual student response system, and one TV monitor.   At this time, the wall is being used as a

screen and the installation of a second TV monitor that is IMPACT recommended would diminish the

ability to do so. Likewise, the library does not have an interactive white board in the library itself, but

has them in the adjoining computer labs should they be needed.

The lack of computers is another area in which Southeast does not meet IMPACT guidelines. IMPACT's guidelines that suggest 3 students to 1 computer in the reference area alone would require a minimum of 10 computers in this one area.   Currently, Southeast Middle School library has 13 computers in the entire library: six are in the mini-lab, two are used at circulation, two are used for automated catalogs, two are in the office, and one is in the workroom. Unfortunately, Guilford County School system only gives 12 computers to the library to be used in all capacities. It is the librarian who must determine their designated use. While long range plans include additional computers to the library, current funding is not available. The one additional computer in the library was placed in the workroom mandatorily with the colored printer.

Aesthetics

The last area in which Southeast Middle School library is in need of improvement is in aesthetics. The new facility has wonderful aesthetic treatments in terms of its ceiling height, its wall and floor color, fabric and wood textures, and many surfaces. However, there are minimal signs, minimal decoration, and unusable display space. The walls are barren throughout the library. Most of this is temporary and is simply due to the newness of the facility.

Revised Facility Plan

The newly opened facility of the Southeast Middle School Library appears perfect with its new paint, new carpet, and new furniture. However, there are a few potential areas that can be revised in order to increase access, improve utilization, and make the library a more welcoming learning environment.

The following recommendations are made for improving the Southeast Middle School Media Center:

- Continue 'Moving In' efforts.

  o Many of the recommendations are items the librarian has intentions of addressing as time and priority allows. She will be bringing in the plants she has at home in the next few weeks before the weather turns cooler. Posters are being laminated for displaying on the walls.

  o Signs that indicate designated areas have not been displayed. Such signs that indicate areas for fiction, non-fiction, and reference need to be put up. Students who attended school at Southeast Middle last year are used to the fiction collection being on the short stacks in rows and the non-fiction collection being along the parameter. Area signs would help serve as a reminder of the new location.

These efforts will make the library a more pleasant atmosphere for student interaction and learning.

- Shelving

    o There is a lot of shelving in the library. Whole sections of shelving are currently unoccupied, such as the shelving across from the casual/informal reading area and the two six foot double sided rolling shelving units between the mini-lab and the circulation desk. Many of the fiction shelving have empty holes in it. The holes in the fiction collection were created during the moving in process with the intent of allowing for expansion of the collection. While this is not an access or guideline discrepancy, the unevenness of the distribution gives an unorganized appearance. With ample shelving, it would give a more polished look to evenly space out the collection especially in the fiction area. Books could also be rearranged so that books are removed from the top shelves of the taller six foot shelving to provide greater ease of access by all users.

    In the case of the empty shelving across from the circulation desk, a display of a featured monthly genre that corresponds with the standard course of study and collaborative efforts with the language arts teachers is recommended.

In the case of the empty shelving across from the casual/informal reading area, it is

recommended that these shelves be used to display student work. Projects,

published writings, or art projects may be displayed on these shelves. The librarian

would need to request teachers display their projects in the library.

- Non-fiction shelf indicators

   o The fiction collection shelving has blue, plastic markers that indicate when the next

      letter of the alphabet begins. It is recommended that similar markers be purchased

      to indicate in the non-fiction collection shelving where the next hundred unit of the

      Dewey Decimal system begins. Currently, the front end of the shelving has a sign

      indicating what call numbers are down the row. Some rows are over 20 feet in

      length. These signs would make location of material easier and quicker for both

      students and staff.

   o Additionally, matching signs should be placed on both ends of the non-fiction rows

      indicating the call numbers for that row need to be made and displayed. Current

      signage is only on the front end of each row. By attaching call number indicator

      signage to the other end of each row, access is increased through location

      assistance. Since current signs are computer-generated, duplicate signs may be as

      well.

- Additional catalog stations

  o The new media center only has two automated catalog stations, and both are on bar-height (40 inch tall) terminals. It is recommended that one more computer be designated for catalog search and placed on ADA standard surfaces located in another area of the library. One additional computer would need to be purchased as well as a lower kiosk. The other location of the automated catalog would not only provide ADA access, but also provide access to an automated catalog station when classes are in the main large group area where the other automated catalog kiosks are stationed.

- Additional individual work areas

  o Because long range planning intends to purchase more computers for the school and the library, the current six individual work areas would be lost to computer stations. It is therefore recommended that a grouping of six to eight individual desks be added to provide individual work areas that do not include the other 'designated areas' for such times when the media center is being maximally utilized. These desks could be arranged in rows back to back between the casual reading area and the circulation desk.

- Mirrors for blind spots

    o To make all areas visible to the circulation desk, reflective mirrors can be added to
       areas in which blind spots are currently. One placed in the rear of the room to make
       visible the hidden corner near the storage room door and one to reflect down the
       bathroom hallway should make the entire room visible from the circulation desk.
       The "make-out corner" is addressed later.

- Adjustments to Areas to assure meeting ADA requirements and maximizing floor space

    o Current arrangement of the small group area is limiting and may not meet ADA
       requirements for access to the collection. By shifting the entire non-fiction
       collection to the right by 3 feet, the small group area expands its square footage
       from 198 square feet to 264 square feet and provides a four foot parameter
       between the tables and shelves. This meets ADA requirements as well as spaces the
       non-fiction collection more appropriately in the space available. Attention to table
       placement needs to be given to not impede doorway while affording maximum
       space for passage.

    o The square table large group area does not provide adequate access between the
       tables and reference collection shelving. Simply rearranging the table direction
       from diagonal to square next to the shelving, and spacing the rows of tables another
       foot or two further apart provides the necessary space for pathways.

- Remove the Make-Out Corner

  o The need for a drop off box inside the library is unnecessary. The library is open at
    all times the students are in the school. Additionally, the circulation desk book
    return is conveniently located at the end of the desk closest to the door. This
    unoccupied and non-visible space presents a security and safety issue for potentially
    wayward students. Options include dry-walling it in from ceiling to floor or putting
    some other form of barrier such as a door and ceiling for added storage. Currently,
    there is more than adequate storage. Therefore, plain dry-walling alone is more
    cost effective.

    A second option, if the construction is not permissible, is to put up a mirror that
    reflects the area so that it is visible from the circulation desk. This is also the most
    inexpensive recommendation.

Budget

The following budget itemizes the expenses needed to implement the above recommendations
for revising the facility. Two totals are given. One total includes the cost for construction to enclose the
space created for the inside book drop box (otherwise known as the 'make-out corner'). The librarian
has been told this is not an option. Therefore, as part of revision plan recommendations, an alternative
of installing a mirror to provide proper visual control is suggested. The lesser total indicates the cost of
revisions without the cost of construction but adds in the cost of the mirror.

Item	Vendor	Quantity	Price	Total
Non-Fiction shelving indicators	Libraryskills.com	1 set of 10	$59.00	$59.00
Security Mirrors for back corner and bathroom hall	Security-mirrors.com	2	$26.90	$53.80
Catalog kiosk	Furniture4schools.com	1	$297.00	$297.00
Double facing student carrels	Demco.com	3	1-$605.00 2-$445.00	$1495.00
Student carrel chairs	Demco.com	6	$134.99	$809.94
Computer workstation for catalog search kiosk	Dell.com	1	$873.00	$873.00
Drywall and work to close 'make-out corner'	Maintenance	2.5 hrs 3 sheets drywall/supplies	$15/hr $150.00	$195.00
Paint	Maintenance	2 hours	$15/hr	$30.00
Mirror for 'make-out corner'	Security-mirrors.com		$26.90	$26.90
Total (without construction)				**$2741.64**
Total(with construction)				**$3812.74**

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