

LIBRARIES BOOST LEARNING!

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Why Do We Need School Libraries?

With today's trend toward trimming budgets and eliminating school programs that seem unnecessary, the library is in danger of being left out of the curriculum. Yet with the push toward increased state test scores, the library is more important than ever in helping the school succeed.

The research in this handout will show how libraries and qualified librarians are making a difference in struggling schools. Information comes from findings of state library studies as well as from professional journals targeted at librarians and administrators commenting on the studies.

Rather than including lists of numbers, this handout will present an overview of simi-

larities of successful schools. (See page 3 for a caution against relying solely on numbers for evaluation.)

Overall findings are consistent that libraries with flexible scheduling and qualified librarians can provide students with access to information and as well as the skills to evaluate and use information. These skills help translate to increased test scores and overall academic achievement.

Studies of school libraries have been conducted or are currently underway in Virginia, Washington, Ohio, Oklahoma, Delaware, Kansas, Colorado, Alaska, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Texas, Oregon, Iowa, New Mexico, Michigan, Illinois,



Florida, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, and Indiana.

The same basic factors of success seem to repeat in each study.

Read on for more ideas and tips to working with the school library to benefit the entire school.

More Information About the School Studies Creator

The instigator of studying how libraries are impacting the school is Keith Curry Lance, Ph.D., the director of the Library Research Service of the Colorado State Library and the University of Denver.

He also teaches for the University of Denver Library and Information Science Program. He was the lead author of the original Colorado study, "The Impact of

School Media Centers on Academic Achievement" (1993) and "How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study" (2000).

He is listed among 100 distinguished school librarians in the *Whole School Library Handbook* (ALA, 2005).



School Librarians Are...

- Resource Agents
- Literacy Development Agents
- Knowledge Construction Agents
- Academic Achievement Agents
- Independent Reading and Personal Development Agents
- Technological Literacy Agents
- Rescue Agents
- Individualized Learning Agents

Learn more on page 2

Profile of a Good School Librarian

To be effective in a school, the librarian needs to meet the following eight characteristics.

1. **Resource Agents.** The School library and librarian provide up to date diverse resources to meet the curriculum's informational needs. The librarian provides instructional interventions by guiding students in their information choices through the effective use of these resources.
2. **Literacy Development Agents.** The school librarian engages students in an active and meaningful search process, enabling them to explore, formulate, and focus their searches, and providing a supportive environment (personal, physical, and instructional) for students to be successful in their research. Students understand that doing good research will lead to better knowledge of the curriculum content, as well as to academic success in their research projects.
3. **Knowledge Construction Agents.** The school librarian develops information literacy scaffolds for engaging students with information in meaningful ways, enabling them to construct and develop new knowledge and understanding.

4. **Academic Achievement Agents.** The school librarian is a dynamic agent of learning who helps students achieve better grades, particularly on research projects and assignments. An agent of academic achievement must be both a credentialed educator and librarian.



5. **Independent Reading and Personal Development Agents.** The school library plays a role in fostering independent reading, particularly in lower grades. Reading materials that target personal pursuits, pleasure reading, and reading for knowledge provide students with an important foundation. It is essential to promote and encourage reading

literacy, academic achievement, and the development of independent, lifelong learners.

6. **Technological Literacy Agents.** The school library plays an important role in information technology by providing students with up-to-date software across multiple media. Lessons must go beyond teaching the effective use of software to include technical troubleshooting (disk, printing, Internet access) and problem-solving skills.
7. **Rescue Agents.** Students have many information crises: they need last-minute resources, help with technology, solutions to technical problems, and help developing these for projects. Indeed, even as a rescue agent, the library is opportunistic, responding to the multiple needs that arise from learning.
8. **Individualized Learning Agents.** The personal touch of a professional school librarian matters a great deal to students. Personal engagement with students is a critical component of an effective school library. School librarians who see themselves as information-learning specialists play a vital role in learning.

Source: Lau (2004), *13,000 Kids Can't Be Wrong*

Not Just Books—Technology Raises Test Scores, Too

Another finding from Keith Curry Lance is the importance of technology in successful library programs.

"Students benefit the most when they have access to subscription databases that are thoughtfully chosen by media specialists, and when librarians train teachers to make the best use of online tools," says Keith Curry Lance.

Lance's findings show that students in schools more technologically advanced libraries performed up to 18% higher on statewide tests.

In 2000, fourth graders in 124 Colorado schools were surveyed and the 25

schools that scored best on the state's standardized tests had an average of 10 computers with access to library resources. The 25 lowest-scoring schools had an average of only 7 computers.

One media specialist, Barbara Linnenbrink in Boulder, encouraged teachers in the use of subscription databases and they now require students to use at least one as a source in research projects rather than just using the internet.

This kind of research will do more to prepare students for further education and increases their information literacy skills. Increased information literacy will also help improve test scores.



Source: Minkel (2002), *Library Technology Raises Test Scores, Too*

A Case Study on Collaboration

In 1997 Bob Berkowitz, librarian extraordinaire and co-creator of the Big6 Research Skills (created with Mike Eisenberg) began a collaborative project with social studies teacher Scott Hopsicker.

Berkowitz met with Hopsicker at least twice a week for two 50-minute planning periods. They would each spend time working independently on project ideas.

Berkowitz encouraged the use of the Big6, which consists of the following steps in the research process:

1. task definition
2. Information seeking strategies
3. Location and access

4. Use of information
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation

Through this collaboration between teacher and librarian, Hopsicker's students went from barely 50% of his students passing the New York American-History Regents Examination to 91% of his students passing.

By focusing on the research process and helping students build transferable skills, Hopsicker was able to move away from teaching toward the test and into teaching students to become independent learners. What could collaboration like this do for test scores in your school?

Source: Acing the Exam, Margolis (2002)



What is Information Literacy and Why is it Important?

Information literacy means knowing how to find, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources. It means knowing when a book may be more helpful than a web site. It means knowing what questions to ask. Is the information complete? Accurate? Is someone trying to sell something?

Good decisions depend on good information. School library media specialists know that the best source of information isn't always Google. They teach 21st century research skills that students will use throughout their lives.

Information Power (ALA, 1998) is an important resource for school media specialists and provides guidelines for

school media programs. One set of guidelines is the nine information literacy standards for student learning.

Information Literacy

The student who is information literate:

- ◆ accesses information efficiently and effectively,
- ◆ evaluates information critically and competently,
- ◆ uses information accurately and creatively.

Independent Learning

The student who is an independent learner is information literate and:

- ◆ pursues information related to personal interests,
- ◆ appreciates literature and other crea-

tive expressions of information,
◆ strives for excellence in information seeking and knowledge generation.

Social Responsibility

The student who contributes positively to the learning community and to society is information literate and:

- ◆ recognizes the important of information to a democratic society,
- ◆ practices ethical behavior in regard to information and information technology,
- ◆ participates effectively in groups to pursue and generate information.

Sources: ALA (2003) Toolkit for School Library Media Programs

ALA (1998) Information Power

Warning About Relying on Numbers for Assessment of Learning

When it comes to assessing our schools and the success of students on state standardized testing, numbers can give an eye-opening picture but may not always tell the whole story. We reassure ourselves that getting the right number means the school is OK or worry if numbers aren't high enough that we're failing our students.

One thing numbers can't do is show the process of learning. Numbers don't tell us if students are learning the skills

to become lifelong learners. Numbers don't gauge students' self-esteem or their ability to work collaboratively with others.

Numbers are still an important part of checking success but they shouldn't be our sole source of information. Teachers and media specialists who work with students of all ages need to make it a priority to communicate the small, sometimes immeasurable success stories.

Using success stories is important because everyone loves a story with a happy ending and most people don't remember statistics unless they are surprisingly good or bad or translated into stories. Just a reminder—kids are more than numbers.

Sources: Johnson (2004) A Data Mining Primer and Implications for School Library Media Specialists

ALA (2003) Toolkit for School Library Media Programs

ALA Position Statement on the Role of the School Library Media Program (excerpt)

The school library media program is not only integral to and supportive of the school curriculum, but also provides a mechanism for choice and exploration beyond the prescribed course of study. The school library media program provides a wide range of resources and information that satisfy the educational needs and interests of students. Materials are selected to meet the wide range of students' individual learning styles. The school library media center is a place where students may explore more fully classroom subjects that interest them, expand their imagination, delve into areas of personal interest, and develop the ability to think clearly, critically, and creatively about the resources they have chosen to read, hear, or view.



The school library media program provides a setting where students develop skills they will need as adults to locate, analyze, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information and ideas in an information-rich world. Students are encouraged to realize their potential as informed citizens who think critically and solve problems, to observe rights and responsibilities relating to the generation and flow of information and ideas, and to appreciate the value of literature in an educated society.

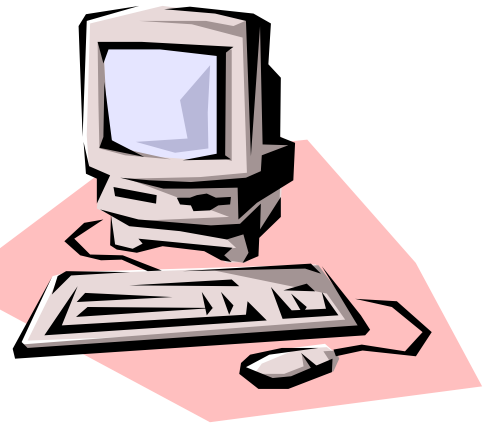
The school library media program serves all of the students of the community—not only the children of the most

powerful, the most vocal or even the majority, but all of the students who attend the school. The collection includes materials to meet the needs of all learners, including the gifted, as well as the reluctant reader, the mentally, physically, and emotionally impaired, and those from a diversity of backgrounds. The school library media program strives to maintain a diverse collection that represents various points of view on current and historical issues, as well as a wide variety of areas of interest to all students served. Though one parent or member of the school community may feel a particular title in the school library media center's collection is inappropriate, others will feel the title is not only appropriate but desirable.

Adopted October 1990.

“Technology, once thought to make school libraries obsolete, has actually increased the need for school library media centers as well as qualified library media teachers to guide students through an increasingly complex information environment.”

—Stotts (2004) *Are Students Being Left Behind? Cutting School Library Services Can Widen the Achievement Gap*



Common Questions About School Libraries

1. Isn't everything available on the internet? Why do we need a school library?

The school library provides more than books. It's a learning hub with a full range of print and electronic resources that support student achievement. These resources include books, magazines, videotapes, computers, databases, and much more. More importantly, there is a school library media specialist to assist students with their information needs and help teachers

develop projects that engage students in developing critical learning and research skills.

2. Why do we need school library media specialists? Can't we use volunteers?

School library media specialists have advanced education degrees as teachers and librarians. They understand how to teach and are experts in children's and young adult literature, as well as information science. They know

what kids like to read and what is appropriate at different stages in their development. They understand how information is organized and how to find it in many different formats—print and electronic. They are there to help classroom teachers teach and students to learn using a variety of using a variety of resources. Few volunteers have the expertise to do this.

Source: ALA (2003) *Toolkit for School Library Media Programs*

Characteristics of a Successful School Library

The same basic criteria emerge in the studies done on good school library programs. Achievement seems to be linked to some basic factors. The following list comes from an article on the Texas study, a notable study in 2001 because it was controlled for demographic difference among schools studied.

The statistically significant positive correlations between student achievement on various standardized tests and library media services and school librarians display the following eleven characteristics:

Successful Media Program Characteristics

1. Large, varied, and up-to-date collections. Collection size alone and books per pupil is meaningless if the information provided is out of date, or worse, inaccurate. Students need a full spectrum of resources for research.
2. One or more full-time qualified librarians. Qualified librarians hold a master's degree in Library and Information Science.
3. Library support staff large enough and skilled enough to free certified librarians from routine clerical duties and to allow them time to teach, to collaborate with teachers, and to engage in leadership activities outside of the library.
4. Free student and teacher access to the library during and beyond school hours. In other words, flexible scheduling.
5. Networked computers providing students and faculty access to catalogs, licensed databases, and the internet.
6. Budget adequate to support the previous five items.
7. Staff commitment to teaching.
8. Individual student library use well beyond scheduled class visitations.
9. Information literacy instruction integrated into the curriculum.
10. Media specialist who collaborates extensively with teachers.
11. Media specialist who is extensively involved in curricular, organizational, and operational school leadership activities outside of the library.

“Principals determine school library media program quality as much as librarians do because they influence or control these eleven factors. As instructional and curriculum leaders, principals also powerfully affect the extent to which information literacy is embedded the body of the school’s curriculum.”

Source: Hartzell (2002) Why Should Principals Support School Libraries?



“These links between high-quality school library programs and academic achievement cannot be explained away as mere artifacts of community socioeconomic factors or key school conditions, such as per pupil spending and teacher-pupil ratio. Indeed, sometimes, taking these variables into account reveals a greater impact by school libraries and library media specialists than was previously masked by those other variables.”

—Keith Curry Lance, Marcia J. Rodney, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners: The Illinois Study. 2005.

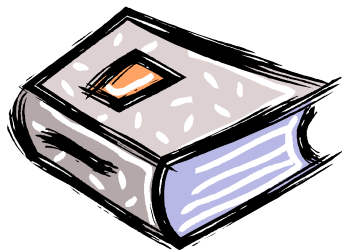
<http://www.islma.org/pdf/ILStudy2.pdf>

State Study Websites

1. **Alaska**
<http://www.library.state.ak.us/pdf/anc/infoemxs.pdf>
2. **Colorado**
http://www.ala.org/aasl/SLMR/slmr_resources/select_lance.html (1993)
<http://www.lrs.org/documents/lmcstudies/CO/execsumm.pdf> (2000)
3. **Florida**
<http://www.sunlink.ucf.edu/makingthegrade/>
4. **Illinois**
<http://www.islma.org/pdf/ILStudy2.pdf>
5. **Indiana**
<http://www.ilfonline.org/Units/Associations/aime/Data/index.htm>
6. **Iowa**
<http://www.aea9.k12.ia.ua/04/statewidelibrarystudy.php>
7. **Massachusetts**
<http://web.simmons.edu/~baughman/mcas-school-libraries/Baughman%20Paper.pdf>
8. **Michigan**
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_lm_schllibstudy03_76626_7.pdf
9. **Minnesota**
<http://metronet.lib.mn.us/survey/index.cfm>
10. **Missouri**
<http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/curriculum/librarestudy/showmeconnection.pdf>
11. **New Mexico**
<http://www.stlib.state.nm.us/files/NMStudyforDistribution.pdf>
12. **North Carolina**
<http://www.rburgin.com/NCschools2003/>
13. **Ohio**
<http://www.oelma.org/studentlearning/default.asp>
14. **Oregon**
http://www.oema.net/Oregon_Study/OR_Study.htm
15. **Pennsylvania**
<http://www.statelibrary.state.pa.us/libraries/lib/libraries/measuringup.pdf>
16. **Texas**
<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/pubs/schlibsurvey/index.html>

Source: Scholastic Research Foundation Paper: *School Libraries Work!* (2005)





Annotated Bibliography

1. AASL (2003). *Toolkit for School Library Media Programs*. Chicago, American Library Association.
A 44-page booklet with marketing and advocacy advice for school media specialists. Includes information to share with parents, administrators, and legislators about the importance of school libraries.
2. Burgin, R., P.B. Bracy, et al. (2003). *An Essential Connection: How Quality School Library Media Programs Improve Student Achievement in North Carolina*.

The results of the North Carolina study of school libraries. The introduction to this study summarized the findings of studies in Alaska, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Oregon, Texas, Iowa, and California. State test scores were shown to increase when libraries in the schools:

- ◆ were staffed more hours during the school week
- ◆ were open more hours during the school week
- ◆ had newer books
- ◆ spent more money per students on book and other print materials like magazines and newspapers
- ◆ spent more money per 100 students on electronic access to information (e.g., online database searching, Internet access)
- ◆ were more likely to subscribe to online periodicals
- ◆ were more likely to subscribe to CD ROM services

3. Glick, A. (2001). "Texas Study Links Libraries, Test Scores." *School Library Journal* **47**(9): 19.
Summarizes findings of the Texas state study. Schools could gain approximately 10 points in school with libraries and librarians who collaborated with teachers.
4. Hamilton-Pennell, C, K.C. Lance, et al. (2000). "Dick and Jane go to the Head of the Class." *School Library Journal* **46**(4): 44-47. School library programs with a full-time media specialist, support staff, and a strong computer network leads to higher student achievement, regardless of social and economic factors in a community.
5. Hartzell, G. (2002). "Why Should Principals Support School Libraries?" *ERIC Digest*. Syracuse, New York, ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology. **2005**.
Principals set the tone for an environment of collaboration in a school as well as the extent to which information literacy is included in the curriculum.
6. Johnson, D. (2004). "A Data Mining Primer and Implications for School Library Media Specialists." *Knowledge Quest* **32**(5): 32-35.
Johnson reports on how media specialists might track and use library statistics but warns of the limitations of using numbers without success stories to explain results.
7. Kimsey-Pharr, F. (2002). "Reflections of an Empowered Library." *The Journal for School Library Professionals (Supplement to Teacher Librarian)* **30**(1): 79-80.
A school principal describes how her school used funds from a Reader's Digest DeWitt Wallace Grant to being a collaborative approach between teachers and the librarian. One finding was that the teachers who had the highest library usage also had the highest test scores.
8. Lance, K.C., M.J. Rodney, et al. (2005). *Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners: The Illinois Study*. Illinois School Library Media Association, Canton, IL, Illinois School Library Media Association.
Findings from the state study conducted in Illinois. A key component of school success was flexible scheduling.
9. Lau, D. (2002). "What Does Your Boss Think About You?" *School Library Journal September*: 52-55
An article discussing the need for school media specialists to communicate with school administrators about successful collaboration projects and the ways these projects impact students.



Annotated Bibliography, continued

10. Loertscher, D.V. (2005). "Keeping Up With the Research Linking School Library Media Center Programs to Achievement: A Handout." American Library Association Conference, Chicago, IL.
This handout available at <http://www.davidvl.org> presents a complete list of weblinks to past and ongoing research projects of school libraries.
11. Margolis, R. (2002). "Acing the Exam." *School Library Journal* **48**(10): 50-52.
An interview with Bob Berkowitz, one of the creators of "Big6 Research Skills." The article presents a case study of Berkowitz's collaboration with a high school teacher on integrating problem-solving skills into his regular lesson plans. Student success increased from 50% of students passing New York's American History Regents Examination to 91% of students passing.
12. Minkel, W. (2002). "Library Technology Raises Test Scores, Too." *School Library Journal* **48**(12): 24-26.
Giving students access to subscription databases in the library and trained librarians who can instruct both teachers and students how to use the databases effectively.
13. Scholastic (2005). Research Foundation Paper: School Libraries Work!, Scholastic Library Publishing.
This handout compiles position statements from different organizations that relate to the importance of school libraries. Presents an overview of state test findings.
14. Stotts, S. (2004). "Are Students Being Left Behind? Cutting School Library Services Can Widen the Achievement Gap! Ohio Research Study: Student Involvement Through Ohio's School Libraries." *Ohio Media Spectrum* **56**(1): 8-12.
Details the importance of students learning information literacy skills from working with the school library. These skills will prepare them for further education.
15. Todd, R.J. and C.C. Kulthau (2003). Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries: A Summary of the Ohio Research Study, Ohio Educational Library Media Association.
This summary presents an overview of the findings in the Ohio study.
16. Whelan, D.L. (2004). "13,000 Kids Can't Be Wrong." *School Library Journal* **February**.
An interview with Ross Todd, one of the leaders of the Ohio Study. The number refers to the number of students surveyed about the importance of the school library. Of the 13,000 students surveyed, only 73 individuals said none of the statements from the survey applied to them.

