

# GOOD

## Schools Have School LIBRARIANS

Oregon School Librarians Collaborate to  
Improve Academic Achievement

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## **Executive Summary**

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Oregon reading test scores rise with the development of school library media (LM) programs. The relationship between LM program development and test scores is not explained away by other school or community conditions at elementary or middle school levels or by other school conditions at high school level.

### **Library Media Program Development**

Oregon reading test scores rise with increases in:

- total staff hours per 100 students (including both professional and support staff),
- print volumes per student,
- periodical subscriptions per 100 students, and
- library media expenditures per student.

Whatever the current level of development of a school's library media (LM) program, these findings indicate that incremental improvements in its staffing, collections, and budget will yield incremental increases in reading scores.

## **School & Community Differences**

The impact of LM program development on academic achievement cannot be explained away by:

- school differences, including:
  - school district expenditures per pupil,
  - teacher/pupil ratio,
  - the average years of experience of classroom teachers, and
  - their average salaries; or
- community differences, including:
  - adult educational attainment,
  - children in poverty, and
  - racial/ethnic demographics.

When these other conditions are taken into account, LM program development alone accounts for three to five percent of variation in Oregon reading scores. Generally its importance falls between that of community differences, which consistently demonstrated stronger effects, and school differences, which usually demonstrated weaker effects.

The only exception to these general findings was at the high school level. While LM program development exerted a distinct impact on test scores apart from other school and community factors at both elementary and middle school levels, community factors did mask the impact of the library media program at the high school level. This aberrant finding is consistent with a pattern revealed by the original Colorado study: the impact of library media programs diminishes as high school students near graduation.

## **Indirect Effects**

Library media (LM) programs exert a complex web of indirect effects on the reading scores of Oregon students. Findings about these indirect effects are summed up in the following description of a strong LM program.

A strong LM program is one

- that is adequately staffed, stocked and funded. Minimally, this means one full-time library media specialist (LMS) and one full-time aide. The relationship, however, is incremental; as the staffing, collections and funding of LM programs grow, reading scores rise.
- whose staff are actively involved leaders in their school's teaching and learning enterprise. A successful LMS is one who has the ear and support of the principal, serves with other teachers on the school's standards and curriculum committees, and holds regular meetings of the LM staff. Students succeed where the LMS participates with classroom teachers and administrators in

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making management decisions that encourage higher levels of achievement by every student.

- whose staff have collegial, collaborative relationships with classroom teachers. A successful LMS is one who works with a classroom teacher to identify materials that best support and enrich an instructional unit, is a teacher of essential information literacy skills to students, and, indeed, is a provider of in-service training opportunities to classroom teachers. Students succeed where the LMS is a consultant to, a colleague with, and a teacher of other teachers.
- that embraces networked information technology. The library media center of today is no longer a destination; it is a point of departure for accessing the information resources that are the essential raw material of teaching and learning. Computers in classrooms, labs and other school locations provide networked access to information resources—the library catalog, electronic full text, licensed databases, locally mounted databases, and the Internet. Students succeed where the LM program is not a place to go, apart from other sites of learning in the school, but rather an integral part of the educational enterprise that reaches out to students and teachers where they are.

The noteworthy positive effects of library media programs on academic achievement, both direct and indirect, are summarized in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 on back page]