

# GOOD

## Schools Have School LIBRARIANS

Oregon School Librarians Collaborate to  
Improve Academic Achievement

*Keith Curry* LANCE  
*Marcia J.* RODNEY  
*Christine* HAMILTON-PENNELL

Published with funds granted by the Oregon State Library  
under the Library Services Technology Act State  
Administered Program, P. L. 104-208

Oregon Educational Media Association - 2001

## **Executive Summary**

---

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

GOOD SCHOOLS HAVE SCHOOL LIBRARIANS  
*Oregon School Librarians Collaborate to Improve Academic Achievement*

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]

Oregon schools with the best reading scores tend to have stronger library media programs than schools with the lowest scores.

At most grade levels, when the confounding effects of poverty are taken into account, library media programs exert a measurable impact on test scores while other school variables, such as per pupil expenditures and teacher-pupil ratio, do not.

### **Other School Library Impact Studies**

For more information about recent research on the impact of school library media programs on academic achievement, visit the Library Research Service web site, <http://www.lrs.org>. Links are provided to:

- **The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement** (the original 1993 Colorado study),
- **How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: *The Second Colorado Study*** (2000),
- **Information Empowered: *The School Librarian as an Agent of Academic Achievement in Alaska*** (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2000), and
- **Measuring Up to Standards: *The Role of Library Information Programs & Information Literacy in Pennsylvania Schools*** (2000)

### **Contact Information**

Direct questions and comments about this research to:

Keith Curry Lance  
Library Research Service  
201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 309  
Denver, CO 80203-1799  
Tel.: 303-866-6737  
Fax: 303-866-6940  
E-mail: [keithlance@earthlink.net](mailto:keithlance@earthlink.net)

# GOOD

## Schools Have School LIBRARIANS

Oregon School Librarians Collaborate to Improve Academic Achievement



*Keith Curry* **LANCE**

*Marcia J.* **RODNEY**

*Christine* **HAMILTON-PENNELL**

Published with funds granted by the Oregon State Library under the Library Services Technology Act State Administered Program, P. L. 104-208

**Oregon Educational Media Association  
2001**

## Teach the Teacher

*As a mentor I have been working with three elementary schools in our district. I have made presentations about the OSLIS Website to the teachers in each of the schools. Wow! It was like giving candy to a baby! Teachers who are often the first to go home stayed way beyond my allotted time exploring all the options. They thanked us for such a wonderful site.*

*Then I was invited to two of the schools to participate in their group planning for their collaboration projects. Again I was delighted with everyone's excitement. All three schools will be completing their projects this year.*

Char Wisely, Media Specialist  
Abraham Lincoln Elementary  
Medford

School library media programs in Oregon schools exert a positive and statistically significant impact on academic achievement.

- Successful LM programs have
- professional and support staff,
  - library media specialists who are involved in teaching and learning as well as information access and delivery,
  - diverse collections in multiple formats,
  - high levels of individual and group visits to the LMC,
  - information technology that extends throughout the school, and
  - expenditures that support these efforts.

The impact of LM programs on Oregon reading scores at elementary and secondary levels cannot be explained away by other school and community conditions.

## Inspiration Point

*When librarians are available full-time, students learn that the librarian is the person who can help them with all sorts of things as they work to meet their learning goals. Students are inspired by the types of presentations a teacher-librarian can provide and are often inspired to try new methods themselves. It's most rewarding when a student asks, "Can you show me how to do what you just did?"*  
Garnetta Wilker, Librarian, Lake Oswego Junior High School

*"Wow- there are some great new books here. I can't wait to read them. Can I check one out now?"*  
Student, Lake Oswego Junior High School

*"This is our library. It's the place where you can find everything you need."*  
Student giving a tour to new seventh grade students, Lake Oswego Junior High School