

The case for school libraries

The investigation:

The findings:

The verdict:

**Strong
libraries
improve
student
achievement**

... statistically significant CSAP increases were related to five characteristics of school media centers:

- **Program Development:** Test scores increased in direct proportion to the ratio of students to library media center staff and library media center resources.
- **Information Technology:** Test scores increased in schools in which networked computers linked library media centers to classrooms and other instructional areas. The percentage of increase was related to the number of computers and the extent to which those computers provided access to library resources, informational databases, and the World Wide Web.
- **Collaboration:** Test score increases were directly related to the degree to which library media specialists and teachers worked together and to the amount of time media specialists spent training teachers to use information technology.
- **Flexible Scheduling:** Test scores increased when students had greater freedom to visit the library media center on their own and to use media center resources at home.
- **Leadership:** Although no direct correlation was found between test scores and the degree of leadership shown by the library media specialist, leadership involvement was found to result in greater collaboration between teachers and media specialists. Greater collaboration resulted in higher test scores.

Keith Curry Lance

... recommendations to help school systems maximize the benefits of their school media centers:

- Fund library media center programs sufficiently to allow for adequate professional and support staff, information resources, and information technology.
- Institute policies and practices that encourage library media specialists to assume positions of leadership in their schools.
- Network technology to make media center resources available throughout the school.
- Institute flexible scheduling wherever possible to allow maximum student access to library media centers.

In addition, according to Lance,

- **principals** should visibly support library media specialists.
- **teachers** should take advantage of the support and services librarians provide.
- **schools of education** should build into their curriculum expectations for introducing pre-teachers to library media center resources.