



THE ILLINOIS STUDY FACT SHEET
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<http://www.islma.org/resources.htm>

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The Study

- Conducted during the fall of 2003
- Data gathered from 657 Illinois schools, grades kindergarten through twelfth were represented
- Data gathered on hours of operation, staff and their activities, library collection and educational technology, total library expenditures, and several types of library usage
- Statistical analysis compared school library and academic achievement indicators: 5th & 8th grade ISAT reading and writing scores; 11th grade PSAE reading scores; and 11th grade ACT scores
- Test performance was compared for schools that were stronger & weaker on each library variable (median and above vs. below)
- School and community variables were accounted for: household income; per pupil spending; teacher-pupil ratio, students' race/ethnicity
- Study is the 14th of its kind and confirms findings from all the other state studies

Higher Achievement is Associated With:

- More hours of flexible scheduling
- Higher staffing levels
- More weekly hours of librarian staffing
- More staff time spent on selected activities
- Larger & more current collections
- School libraries more accessible via technology
- More money spent on libraries
- Higher usage of middle and high school libraries

The evidence produced by this study indicates that Illinois school libraries contribute measurably to the academic achievement of students as reflected by their test scores. At all grade levels, test scores tend to be higher:

- where access to school libraries is more flexibly scheduled,
- where school libraries are staffed more fully,
- where school librarians spend more time collaborating with classroom teachers,
- where larger collections are available,
- where educational technology is more widely available to augment the local collection and, generally, to extend access to online resources into the classroom,
- where school libraries are better funded, and
- where students use school libraries, both individually and in groups, to learn and practice the information literacy skills they will need to excel on tests and as lifelong learners.

These links between high-quality school library programs and academic achievement cannot be explained away as mere artifacts of community socio-economic factors (i.e., household income, race/ethnicity) or certain key school conditions (per pupil spending, teacher-pupil ratio). Indeed, sometimes taking these contextual variables into account reveals a greater impact by school libraries or librarians that was previously masked by those other variables. *In short, the findings of this study and its predecessors support the belief that powerful libraries - and librarians - do, indeed, make powerful learners.*

Research Finding #1: Schools with better-staffed libraries have more students who succeed on tests.

Research Finding #2: High Schools with computers that connect to library catalogs and databases average 6.2% improvement on ACT scores.

Research Finding #3: Students that visit the library more frequently receive improved reading and writing scores.

Research Finding #4: Students with access to larger, more current book collections achieve higher reading, writing, and ACT scores.

The Recommendations

Several recommendations for action relating to Illinois schools are offered on the basis of this study's findings:

- ◆ **Access to school libraries should be scheduled as flexibly as possible.** Local conditions sometimes limit the extent to which flexible scheduling can be adopted. Vested interests in existing schedules sometimes make it difficult to make such changes. But, the evidence supports a policy of flexible scheduling to maximize the benefits to students and teachers of school library programs.
- ◆ **A high-quality school library, at any grade level, requires at least one librarian plus support staff.** It is through collaboration with classroom teachers that school librarians affect the academic achievement of students. It is when visiting school libraries that students benefit from their usage. For both of these sets of activities to occur, both types of library staff are needed.
- ◆ **Computers that provide access to library resources - in the library or elsewhere in the school - should be available to facilitate student performance.** When library and educational technology programs are coordinated, library resources can be available to students and teachers when and where the resources are needed. Computers outside the library, but connected to library resources, extend the reach of the library program beyond its own walls. At the same time, the results of this study suggest that print collections of books and periodicals remain important resources, and that their currency is especially important.
- ◆ **School libraries should be funded to maintain their traditional collections as well as expand their reach beyond the library's walls via educational technology.** School libraries must purchase and continue to purchase the information resources required to support instruction in their schools, whether it is available in print or online.
- ◆ **Last, but not least, students achieve academically when their visits to libraries bring them into contact with librarians as teachers and co-teachers.** Clearly, visits to libraries impact academic achievement most when libraries are being used as classrooms, study spaces, training facilities, and research

centers. School libraries and librarians should not merely support instruction in their schools; they should be integral to it.

So what?

If you are a teacher...

- ◆ Meet with your librarian often to collaborate on how best to work information literacy into your classroom and curriculum.
- ◆ Take your students to the library - often - and co-teach with your librarian those critical research skills (information literacy).
- ◆ Invite your librarian into your classroom to share new resources and how to use them with your students.
- ◆ Tell your librarian about resources that would benefit your students with their homework.

If you are an administrator...

- ◆ Ensure librarians are members of technology and curriculum committees in order for Information Literacy to be an integral part of all curriculum decisions.
- ◆ Facilitate flexible scheduling in buildings whenever and wherever possible.
- ◆ Consider librarians and libraries as ESSENTIAL to academic improvement, not as "frills" that are expendable when finances are tight.
- ◆ Make sure your libraries have funding to purchase current resources and technologies - print and non-print. Weed collections regularly and replace resources afterwards.

If you are a parent or community member...

- ◆ Volunteer in your school's library. Your assistance can provide extra time for library staff to work with teachers and students.
- ◆ Encourage your parent/teacher organization to support the library with extra funds or fundraiser projects.

If you are a Board of Education member...

- ◆ Guarantee a significant level of funding for library resources and staffing regardless of school enrollment at all levels.
- ◆ Visit your schools' libraries. Ask about the role of the librarian related to information literacy.
- ◆ Ask questions about library connections to curriculum developments and projects.
- ◆ Support collaboration (financial & personnel) for integration of library resources and programs and technology infrastructures.