

Pennsylvania School Libraries:

*Key Players In
Education*



Office of
Commonwealth Libraries

2007



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**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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“One of the cornerstones of No Child Left Behind is teaching children to read. School Libraries play a critical role by providing children with books and resources so that they can improve their reading skills and achieve at high levels.”

- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

“The future belongs to those who prepare for it.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

JUST ANOTHER DAY IN A PLUGGED-IN HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY...

A high school freshman enters the school library with his book-bag and his laptop. He chooses a study carrel, plugs in the laptop, and begins his homework. First he logs on to the campus network and opens his personal email account to check for further assignments or messages from his teachers. He opens Microsoft Word and saves a biology assignment in a document. Then he opens the online school library catalog and searches for books on taxonomy for his biology assignment. He goes to the shelves, and with the help of the school librarian, chooses an appropriate book. Going back to his study carrel, he locates information in the book about the plants assigned to him and then opens Microsoft Word and begins taking notes on his screen.

After about ten minutes of note taking, he clicks on Netscape and enters the Internet world. He opens the science site recommended to him by his teacher in the email message and views the Science Learning Network. As he identifies additional characteristics of his assigned plants, he adds the information to his notes in Word.

Near the end of his class period, he opens his Netscape Bookmarks and opens a Wall Street site to check a stock that he has been tracking daily for his Economics class. These activities are not the exception but the rule in the library at the Kiski School.

**Diana G. Murphy, Head Librarian
The Kiski School
Saltsburg, PA**

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL LIBRARIES: KEY PLAYERS IN EDUCATION

Pennsylvania's school libraries are key players in providing students with opportunities to become critical seekers of knowledge, users of technology and independent life-long learners in the global society of the Information Age. Since "a primary goal of public education is to prepare students to be engaged and effective citizens" (*Knowledge Quest, Volume 34/Number 4*), school librarians provide instruction in information literacy skills at all levels, primary grades through high school.

The school library's resources, including print, non-print, and electronic materials, as well as network access, support the curriculum of the entire school district. The school library program is integrated into the total curriculum. Through collaboration with classroom teachers, school librarians teach students information literacy skills - the ability to find and use information. Mastering these skills enables students to identify, locate, retrieve, organize, evaluate and apply information.

“School library media centers can contribute to improved student achievement by providing instructional materials aligned to the curriculum; by librarians collaborating with teachers, administrators, and parents; and by extending their hours of operation beyond the school day.”

- “Close Up: NCLB – Improving Literacy Through School Libraries.”
- *NCLB The Achiever, September 15, 2004, Vol. 3, No. 13.*

SCHOOL LIBRARIANS:

In this world of exponential information growth and continual technological advancement, schools need to shift from assessing passive memorization of facts to promoting the ability to find and use information efficiently and effectively. School librarians are the key players who link students, teachers and others to needed resources. The school librarian has four specific responsibilities:

- As **Teacher**, the school librarian collaborates with teachers and other members of the learning community to analyze learning and information needs, to locate and use resources that will meet those needs, and to understand and communicate the information the resources provide.
- As **Instructional Partner**, the school librarian joins with teachers and others to identify links across student information needs, curricular content, learning outcomes and a wide variety of print, nonprint and electronic information resources.
- As **Information Specialist**, the school librarian provides leadership and expertise in acquiring and evaluating information resources in all formats; in bringing awareness of information issues into collaborative relationships with teachers,

administrators, students and others; and in modeling for students and others strategies for locating, accessing and evaluating information within and beyond the library media center.

- As **Program Administrator**, the school librarian works collaboratively with members of the learning community to define the policies of the school library program and to guide and direct all the activities related to it. (*Information Power*)

School librarians facilitate the students’ development of lifelong reading skills, lifelong learning skills, and the motivation to take responsibility for their own learning. Information literacy and critical thinking are essential if students are to live successfully in our rapidly changing, information-oriented society. School librarians are instrumental in making sure all of the above happens.



“The extent to which books are borrowed from school libraries shows a strong relationship with reading achievement.”

- “Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement.” *Newsletter of the Council for Educational Research. No. 10 (2003): 4.*

TEAM TEACHING GOOD JUDGMENT

I have put together a lesson with our 10th grade speech teacher concerning the authority and validity of Internet sites. I have worked up a handout concerning the interpretation of domain names. This includes a copy of “Authority and Validity Checklist for Internet Sites” from the summer 1997 issue of *Learning & Media*. After distributing and going over the handout, the teacher and I use an overhead display of various Web site addresses to reinforce the lesson and promote class discussion and participation. We project several different sites with our LCD projector and show the students where credits and colophons for different sites can be found and how they can be used to authenticate a site. This lesson will be used when the teacher discusses the importance of using credible sources when doing research for informative speeches and debates.

Peggy Mourer
Seneca Valley Intermediate High School
Harmony, PA



“School library media centers can contribute to improved student achievement by providing instructional materials aligned to the curriculum; by librarians collaborating with teachers, administrators, and parents; and by extending their hours of operation beyond the school day.”

- “Close Up: NCLB – Improving Literacy Through School Libraries.”
- *NCLB The Achiever, September 15, 2004, Vol. 3, No. 13.*

SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMS:

A quality school library program is linked to several basic principles or essential elements, including:

Flexible Scheduling – An effective school library program provides an open flexible schedule in which the librarian, facility and resources are available to students and teachers on an “as needed” basis. Classes have few limitations on the length of the visit or the frequency of the visits.

Information Literacy – An effective school library program focuses on the process of learning rather than on dissemination of information. Information literacy – the ability to find, evaluate and use information – is the keystone to life-long learning. Application of these skills within content areas supports students in meeting the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.

Technology – An effective school library program utilizes current technology to provide efficient access to, and effective communication of, information. Technology facilitates individual and small group research as well as large group instruction. It provides fast, efficient retrieval of information on-and off-site. The use of technology provides students with lifelong skills for the technological age and facilitates the production and communication of information.

Governance/Management – An effective school library program is governed by the policies of the local Board of Education and is administered by a certified school librarian. The collection development plan and selection policies support the curriculum and represent the interests of the entire school community, thereby giving students physical and intellectual access to necessary resources.

Staffing – An effective school library program provides adequate professional and clerical staff to meet the needs of the school community. Certified school librarians are essential to the success of the program because the school librarian is a trained professional involved in the implementation of student-centered learning, collaborative learning, technology initiatives and integration of information literacy into the curriculum. Skilled support staff allows more time for the school librarian to work with students and classroom teachers.



Resources - An effective school library program provides appropriate, accurate, and current resources in all formats to meet the needs of the school community. As the amount of information increases, the most current and appropriate resources must be available to ensure students' achievement of academic standards. Additional resources should support literature-based instruction, extended school services and pre-school programs.

Environment - An effective school library program provides an inviting, accessible, and stimulating place for individual and group use. An appealing environment and appropriate resources encourage academic and recreational use by students. Adequate, well-designed space provides areas for independent, small group, and large group activities.

Research - Research shows that strong school library programs do make a significant difference when integrated with the total educational curriculum in properly staffed facilities with resources that are responsive to the curriculum. The goal of the school library program is to assist all students in becoming active and creative locators, evaluators and users of information to solve problems and to satisfy their own curiosity.

Our own Pennsylvania research study, *Measuring Up To Standards: The Impact of School Library Programs & Information Literacy in Pennsylvania Schools* (Lance), explored the effect the school

library programs have on student academic achievement. The study used data collected from more than 400 Pennsylvania schools. This study has been replicated in a number of other states with similar or even more positive findings. Some of the major findings in Pennsylvania indicate:

- The size of a school library's staff and collection is the best school predictor of academic achievement.
- Among school and community predictors, the size of the school library staff and collection is second only to the absence of at-risk conditions, particularly poverty and low educational attainment among adults.
- Students who score higher on standardized tests tend to come from schools with more school library staff and more books, periodicals, and videos regardless of other factors, including economic ones. PSSA



(Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) reading scores tend to increase by 10 to 15 points when all school library predictors are maximized.

- The instructional role of the school librarian guides collection development, and in turn, academic achievement.
- School library expenditures affect school library staff and collection size and, in turn, academic achievement.



STAFFING + TECHNOLOGY = INTEGRATION

When a blind 7th grader enrolled in Centerville Middle School, being able to provide library services and accessibility to resources in the library was a priority. After receiving technology money, from the school district's technology budget, the school library was able to purchase a Windows NT station that could handle special equipment for this student. By using screen reading software, a scanner with speech access software, an external speech synthesizer, a Braille embosser, and a sighted person as a reader, the blind student was able to access the same resources the other students were able to access.

The school library was able to provide the necessary resources because of the equipment and because the school library employed a secretary/aide. The aide acted as a reader when the student used printed texts in the library, helped scan material and then edit the material so that the student could listen to the information and take notes in the library. Information was sent to a Braille embosser so that the student could take the information home. The student learned how to use the screen reading software so that he could use the library databases such as the library catalog, magazine indexes, electronic encyclopedias, and the Internet.

**Cathi Fuhrman,
Library Department Chair
Centerville Middle School Library
Centerville, PA**

“In short, the findings of this study and its predecessors support the belief that powerful school libraries – and librarians – do, indeed, make powerful learners.”

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

LUCKY PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

I've had the opportunity to go to the American Library Association Conferences and the American Association of School Librarians Conferences. At each conference I talked to school librarians from across the country. I have come to realize Pennsylvania school librarians really are fortunate. We benefit from the leadership and expertise of the Division of School Library Services at the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Through the division, we have advisory services that address myriad needs, such as fostering collaboration with other organizations, critiquing the design of new or the renovation of older libraries, and serving as the liaisons to the Access PA Database Program and the POWER Library Program. Through the division, we have library listservs that help unite our profession, exemplary professional development workshops that are the envy of other states, and Library Services and Technology Act grants for Pennsylvania's K-12 libraries that provide grant funds for collection development or wireless laptop labs. When we need help, the division is there for us.

Cynthia A. Keller
Director of School Library
Certification Program
Mansfield University of Pennsylvania
Mansfield, PA



The Lance study is a powerful argument for the support of strong school library programs as an essential component in every school. The following recommendations are based on the findings of the Lance Study, and the national standards and guidelines for school library media programs published in the American Association of School Librarians' standards, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*:

1. Provide a sufficient number of certified school librarians to facilitate a dynamic learning environment.
2. Provide sufficient funding so that the school library can meet its mission.
3. Assure collaboration between the school librarian and classroom teachers to integrate information literacy across discipline areas.
4. Provide a collection to meet the needs of the curriculum and support the achievement of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.
5. Provide sufficient space/facilities within each school to meet the needs of a student-centered learning environment.
6. Involve school librarians in the planning and administration of an electronic network within the district to facilitate access to global resources.

7. Provide equitable access to the school library and its collection for all students, including those with special needs.
8. Provide a sufficient number of library support staff to manage the routine day-to-day operations of the school library.
9. Provide funds and release time for the ongoing, professional development of all library professionals in the school district.
10. Provide an environment to foster intellectual freedom, to encourage intellectual curiosity, and to ensure information literacy.
11. Foster a love of reading by encouraging students and staff to read independently for pleasure and for information.
12. Encourage students to become skillful consumers and producers of information.
13. Foster partnerships with local, state, and global educational entities. Some of these might be public and academic libraries, museums, and unique local resources, which will enhance students' learning experiences.
14. Operate the school library on a flexible schedule that enables students and teachers to have equitable and continuous access to the school library.

CAREER DAY IN THE LIBRARY

At Sharswood Elementary School, the librarian serves on the Leadership Team and helps plan educational events for the K-8 school. This past year a whole new approach to Career Day was instituted. I collaborated with the 7th and 8th grade teachers and established a universal format for the students' career reports. Next, I showed the teachers how much and what kind of career resources could be found in the library and, based on the library's collection, the teachers helped each student select a career to explore. Since the Sharswood library is on a flexible schedule, the teachers selected periods for doing research in the library. Each class came to the library, as a group, for three days in a row so the teacher and I could explain the assignment, give directions, and monitor first attempts at locating information. After the introductory period, students came individually or in small groups to work on their reports either before school, at lunch, after school, or during the day (with teacher permission).

The second part of the project required students to prepare résumés for their selected career. While I worked with students in the library, their teacher worked with students in the classroom on how to prepare résumés and techniques for successful job interviews.

The culminating activity was a Career Fair in the library. Each library table became a site for a specific career. Students would travel from table to table, with their resumes, and "interview" for a job. Career Day was a great success for students and their parents who volunteered to be career guests or hosts for other guests. The May 2006 Career Fair included agents from the EPA and DEA, officers from the police and fire department, small business owners, the regional superintendent, reporters and writers, advertising executives, hair stylists, physicians, nurses, day care providers, technologists, electricians and a professional dancer.

Rachelle Nocito, Cybrarian
George Sharswood Elementary School
Philadelphia, PA

PART OF A CURRICULUM TEAM

In my school, the librarian is an integral part of the High School Steering Committee, which is made up of five Area Coordinators and other school leaders, such as the Technology Director. We meet monthly and, together, we make decisions about many building-wide policies and, most importantly, future curriculum directions.

We review all curriculum proposals and decide which course changes and initiatives will be presented to the board. Not only do I get to provide input from my vantage point of viewing the school's curriculum as a whole, but I also get to know in advance which content areas to emphasize in collection development.

**Allison Hutchison, Librarian
Bald Eagle Area High School
Wingate, PA**



INCREASING TEST SCORES:

When networked computers link school libraries with classrooms, labs and other instructional sites, students earn higher PSSA reading test scores. These higher scores are particularly linked to the numbers of computers enabling students and teachers to utilize the Access Pennsylvania Database, licensed databases such as the POWER Library, and the Internet. Test scores increase as school librarians spend more time:

- Teaching cooperatively with teachers
- Teaching information literacy independently
- Providing in-service training for teachers
- Serving on standards committee
- Serving on curriculum committee
- Managing information technology



Linking Library Literacy Through Wireless Technology

Students at Jarrettown Elementary School, in the School District of Upper Dublin, are learning library research and reference skills with the use of 25 wireless Dell laptops, thanks to the LSTA grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

In order to comply with the terms of the grant, 85% of Jarrettown's teachers were required to collaborate with the librarian at least twice annually on teaching the information literacy skills necessary for their students to become independent, productive learners. Jarrettown teachers exceeded the requirement set by the state, as many teachers collaborated weekly with the librarian throughout the year. Many of the teachers found they were learning new technology skills along with their students. Jarrettown students happily did their part to fulfill the requirements of the grant through the creation of a variety of presentations, using PowerPoint™, Microsoft Word™, Kidspiration™, Inspiration™, and Microsoft Paint™. These lessons are designed by the librarian and teachers to address the American Association of School Librarians' Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning. For example, second graders read and took notes on a non-fiction book about alligators and crocodiles. They used Microsoft Word™ to word-process their notes, and then learned to use Microsoft Paint™ to create an illustration to insert into their Microsoft Word™ document, and added appropriate source citations. This activity successfully addressed the AASL standards for students to evaluate information, to use information creatively, and to practice ethical behavior in regard to information. All students' works are displayed in the Jarrettown Library for students, parents, and other community members to view.

As a librarian, there is nothing more delightful than having a seven year old say to you "Guess what I did last night? I taught my parents how to insert a Paint™ graphic into a Microsoft Word™ document like you showed us in class." Third grade classes learned to use advanced PowerPoint™ actions, such as "repeat" and "timer," to present a slideshow

of their Native American biographical research. The shows made impressive backdrops for the Jarrettown Open House for parents.

Having the laptops permanently housed in the library has allowed all of the students to access information, evaluate it, and create a new form of information or expression to share with other students during their regularly scheduled classes in the library.

Jarrettown's success with its laptop program received national recognition when the librarian and the technology director presented a workshop entitled *Linking Library Literacy Through Wireless Technology* at the International Society for Technology in Education conference in New Orleans in 2004.

Jennifer Ruitter, Librarian
Jarrettown Elementary School
Dresher, PA



“When effective school libraries are in place, students do learn. 13,000 students can’t be wrong.”

– Ross J. Todd, Carol C. Kuhlthau, and OELMA. *Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries*. 2004.

“One for the Money..... Two for the Show.....”

1. One for the Money

Montoursville Area High School librarian, Christine Kaiser, applied for an LSTA Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries, and was awarded funds for the purchase of a 24 laptop mobile computer lab, with printer and LCD projector.

2. Two for the Show

Apply to the Governor’s Institute on Information Literacy and Reading.

“Receiving *money* for the purchase of the laptops was a great boost to the library itself. However, the Governor’s Institute for Reading and Information Literacy was the greatest tool for *showing* the students, teachers, and administrators the purpose and necessity of information literacy,” proclaims Kaiser.

A team of four: the librarian, a classroom teacher (English), one learning support teacher, and one administrator, in accordance with the Governor’s Institute requirements, attended the 2005 Governor’s Institute for Reading and Information Literacy. Together they attended sessions on such topics as reading lenses, BDA (Before-During-After) reading strategies, POWER library, and heard speakers such as Keith Curry Lance. One of their favorite sessions was “Ban those Bird Units,” which provided alternatives to the traditional research paper, using research models that promote cognitive thinking skills while adhering to state standards and reducing the temptation for student plagiarism.

Having other co-workers in the building who were also excited and knowledgeable about “non google” research was empowering. In addition to conducting an in-service for our teachers, the library now had a team of promoters for information literacy and reading.”

Returning from the Governor’s Institute, armed with lesson plans, and having a state-of-the-art mobile computer lab available in the library was the perfect combination for implementing an improved and renovated library program. This dynamic duo will enhance any secondary school library.

The results for the 2005-2006 school year at Montoursville were these:

- Only subscription databases, such as POWER library, were permitted for student research papers.
- Over 70% of the faculty used the laptops for research with their classes, collaborating with the librarian.
- Alternative research models were utilized.
- The teachers identified students testing below basic for the librarian who assisted these students with reading levels and BDA strategies when conducting internet searches.
- There was increased communications between librarians and departments and technology personnel.
- Library scheduling was more flexible.
- Student teachers utilizing the library rose to 100%.
- This librarian had the best year of teaching in 27 years!

Christine Kaiser, Librarian
Montoursville Area High School
Montoursville, PA

SUMMARY:

Pennsylvania school library programs can make a difference in supporting the efforts of schools to “Measure Up To Standards.” Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) reading scores increase with increases in the following characteristics of school library programs: staffing, information technology and the integration of information literacy into the curriculum. In addition, as staffing, information resources and information technology rise, school library staff spends more time teaching students and teachers how to access and use information resources. The relationship between staffing and test scores is not explained away by other school or community conditions. For school library programs to be successful agents of academic achievement, information literacy must be an integral part of the school’s approach to both standards and curriculum. When all school library predictors are maximized (e.g., staffing, library expenditures, information resources and technology, and information literacy activities of the staff), PSSA reading scores tend to run 10 to 15 points higher.

Our Pennsylvania school libraries really do make a difference!



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