

## **Michigan Department of Education**

### **Message #128 - Access to and Use of Libraries and the Achievement Gap**

Studies have shown that libraries are an important education resource that supports students' academic growth and development. School libraries have been found to contribute to academic achievement; a positive correlation has been shown to exist between the time spent in the library and academic performance<sup>1</sup>. A three year study conducted by the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL, 2012)<sup>2</sup> showed that libraries contribute positively to academic success and achievement by improving student test scores, developing thinking-based competencies in information usage, as well as nurturing positive and ethical values related to the use of information technology, and interest in reading.

#### **Discussion of the Problem**

The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) provides some crucial statistics on the number of libraries available to residents in different states. Top of the list is Vermont with 30 public libraries per 100,000 people. Hawaii comes last with less than one library for the same number of people. The State of Michigan is ranked #23 with slightly less than four libraries per 100,000 residents<sup>3</sup>. Low numbers of libraries mean limited access to library materials including many digital resources that could be accessible to children and adults who may not have internet access, and therefore go to libraries in order to access web-based resources. Shortage of libraries therefore limits access to important resources. It has also been observed that libraries that are situated in affluent locations tend to have better resources and more advanced technology.

#### **The Alternative**

Studies have shown there is a high positive correlation between student performance and school library programs<sup>4</sup>. The impact of libraries in improving achievement among students has been documented in various studies as outlined by the New York Comprehensive Center's information brief on *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement* (2011)<sup>5</sup> that presented state impact studies showing better scores for students in cases where school teachers collaborated with school library personnel to plan and identify educational resources. School and public library staff give children and youth access to a range of programs and resources appropriate to differing developmental stages. Libraries have also been found to support student learning and to enhance retention of content that has been taught.

#### **Call to Action**

Given the important role played by libraries in enhancing teacher effectiveness, developing early childhood learning opportunities, raising graduation rates for at-risk students, and improving test scores, it is important to advocate for sufficient funding for increased resources for libraries and also for the training and maintenance of library personnel. Principals, teachers, and other administrators are also encouraged to support their students' use of libraries by incorporating within their curriculum learning goals and objectives that are linked to library usage.

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<sup>1</sup> ERIC Development Team. (2001). *Proof of the Power: Recent Research on the Impact of School Library Media Programs on the Academic Achievement of U.S. Public School Students*. ERIC Digests.

<sup>2</sup> Taniguchi, L. T., (2012) Three-year study asserts benefits of school libraries on student learning.  
[http://www.nj.com/cumberland/index.ssf/2012/02/three-year\\_study\\_asserts\\_benef.html](http://www.nj.com/cumberland/index.ssf/2012/02/three-year_study_asserts_benef.html)

<sup>3</sup> StateMaster [http://www.statemaster.com/graph/edu\\_pub\\_lib\\_num\\_of\\_cen\\_lib\\_percap-libraries-number-central-per-capita](http://www.statemaster.com/graph/edu_pub_lib_num_of_cen_lib_percap-libraries-number-central-per-capita)

<sup>4</sup> Kachel, D. (2011). *School Library Research Summarized: A Graduate Class Project*. Mansfield University.

<sup>5</sup> New York Comprehensive Center (2011) *Informational Brief: Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement*.