

How Much of a Difference Do School Libraries Make?

In California's high schools, which have the overwhelming majority of fully-staffed school libraries, the school library program accounts for between 19-21% of the variance in STAR test scores.

On the U.S. History STAR test, the library program is a better predictor of scores than parent education, poverty, ethnicity, percentage of English language learners, teacher salaries, and teacher experience.



(illustration by Marla Frazee)

Results from the California Study are confirmed by studies in 20 states that show a relationship between school libraries and student achievement.

School Libraries Work!

How You Can Support Your Child's Education through Your School Library:

- Visit your school library and meet the staff. Is there a teacher librarian available to work with students? If not, let your principal and school board know of your concerns.
- Get to know your school librarian. Ask what the needs are and how you can help. Donations of books and equipment such as computers and video players may be welcome. Offer to volunteer your time.
- Join the Friends of the Library group, which volunteers fundraising and other efforts. If there is not one in place, help start one.
- Contact your legislators and let them know you think school libraries should be a priority in funding education.

For more information about the impact of school libraries on student achievement, visit

School Libraries Work: Summaries of studies from 20 states and Canada
http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/s/slw3_2008.pdf

Haves, Halves and Have Nots: School Libraries and Student Achievement in California: Doctoral research by Doug Achterman,
<http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9800/>

California School Libraries:

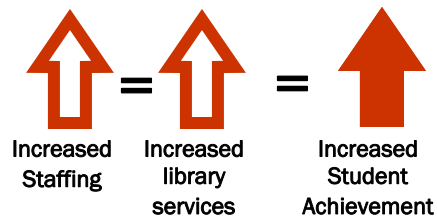


Hugo Cabret courtesy of Brian Selznick

A Parent Guide for Promoting Equity, Opportunity, and Achievement

What Research Shows about School Libraries and Student Achievement:

- California public schools with strong school library programs tend to outperform those without such programs on the state's STAR tests.
- This trend holds regardless of the school community's parent education and poverty levels, ethnicity, and percentage of English language learners.



- Increases in library staffing (both professional and paraprofessional) are related to increases in services the library provides.
- Increases in the number of services school libraries provide are related to higher STAR test scores.

What Makes a Strong School Library Program?

A strong school library program provides

- A full-time teacher librarian and a full time paraprofessional.
- A robust, up-to-date collection of digital, print and media resources with a budget to support it.
- Liberal access to the library's facilities, technology, and resources.

Besides staffing, what elements of a school library program are related to higher STAR scores and student achievement?

- Total hours library open
- Total technology available through library
- Total services provided by library staff
- Curriculum-integrated information literacy instruction
- Informal instruction in use of resources
- Reference assistance to students and teachers

How Do I Know If Our School Has a Strong Library Program?

Questions to Ask Your Principal and School Board:

- Do we have a full-time certificated teacher librarian in our library (as opposed to a "librarian," who could be anyone from a paraprofessional to a parent volunteer)?
- In addition to a full-time teacher librarian, do we have full-time clerical staff as well?
- Are you aware of the research showing that increases in library staffing are related to increases in STAR test scores?
- How often does the principal meet with the teacher librarian to discuss the goals, vision, plan, and activities of the library program?
- Is the library open enough to provide access for students who do not have technology access at home?
- Does the library program's budget account for the need to purchase new print and online resources on an ongoing basis? Is there a budget and a plan to keep technology software and hardware up to date?