School Library Media: Don't Cut What Works!

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To date, sixteen states including Michigan, have conducted research studies showing the benefit school libraries and school library media specialists have on student achievement (School Libraries Work!, 2006). Findings of the 2003 Michigan study on the impact of school library media services (Rodney, Lance, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2003) reveal that Michigan schools that have longer library hours and a certified school library media specialist on staff tended to have a higher percentage of the best MEAP scores than other schools without these qualities. Furthermore, these differences in test scores could not be explained away by either community or school differences.

At the elementary school level, in schools with school library media specialists, 35% more fourth grade students scored proficient or above on the MEAP Reading Test in 2002 than in schools without school library media specialists. At the middle school level, in schools with school library media specialists, 23% more seventh graders scored proficient or above on the MEAP Reading Test in 2002 than in schools without school library media specialists. At the high school level, in schools with school library media specialists, 8% more eleventh graders scored proficient or above on the MEAP Reading Test in 2002 than in schools without school library media specialists.

The program and the professional in the school library media center are two factors that impact student achievement. Reading scores tend to be higher in schools where the school library media center is open more hours per week and has a flexible schedule assuring access. Also, reading scores tended to be higher in schools where the school library media specialist spends more time collaborating and working with teachers to integrate information skills and a variety of resources into meaningful curricular projects. Thus the professional school library media specialist is a partner in developing curriculum and teaching students the strategies and skills needed to select, evaluate and utilize a variety of electronic and traditional resources. Therefore the school library media professional and center impact student achievement.

Michigan educational decision-makers must take action to achieve the following goals:

- Staff school library media centers with qualified professional school library media specialist and support staff to facilitate collaboration in the design and delivery of instruction
- Assure that the school library media center staff, facilities and collection are accessible not only during school, but also before and after school
- Provide appropriate funding for current and relevant print and electronic resources including technology that support the love of reading and the school curriculum

... or risk cutting what's working and leaving students behind.

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_lmschlibstudy_03_75626_7.pdf

http://www.scholastic.com/librarypublishing